

SUMMARY OF SERMON AT FBC ON SUNDAY 26/10/08 AT EVENING WORSHIP

This was the last in the series of five sermons on the five chapters of the book of James in the New Testament. The speaker was Sam Ennis who dealt with James 5 : verses 1 – 20 with emphasis on verses 7 – 12.

KEY VERSE

" ...remember this : whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." (v.20).

INTRODUCTION

Because of the various controversies arising from the letter of James and to which reference has been made in previous sermons, Martin Luther wanted to remove the book of James from the bible!

Verses 1 – 6 contain a warning to rich oppressors. Sam pointed out that James refers in these verses to people who do not know the Lord.

Verses 7 and onwards, dealing with patience, is addressed to believers and it is these verses that formed the subject of Sam's sermon.

Before dealing with patience, Sam issued a warning:

In a world swamped today with evil and wicked language, we as believers must be careful in our viewing and reading. The language we find so prevalent will serve to soil our spirits and has no place amongst us. We must remember that when Peter wanted to deny the Lord, he began to curse and swear (see Mark 14:71).

The second introductory comment Sam made was that, where healing from sickness may be connected to the forgiveness of sins, the believer should feel entitled to call on the elders to pray over him, and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

OUTLINE OF SERMON

In verses 7-11, James writes about patience. Sam dealt with this topic with reference to:

- patience being needed in waiting for the coming of the Lord;
- patience in dealing with brethren; and
- patience in the face of suffering and persecution.

PATIENCE NEEDED IN WAITING FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD

That Jesus will one day return is not to be doubted: there are almost 400 references in 25 out of the 27 books of the New Testament to the certainty of Christ's coming again. If this is not to happen, then the NT writers were seriously deceived.

However, the date of his return is not known and defies prediction.

The signs for which we can look out that will serve as an indication of the event, are given to us. * (see footnote). But in relying on these, we must take cognisance of what Peter says about God's time-frame and about 1000 years being equivalent to a day (2 Peter 3:8).

So, we do need to be patient. Great human tragedy has arisen as a result of impatience : one such tragedy arose from the prediction by William Miller that 1843 would be the year of the Lord's coming. A similar prediction, with 101 reasons, was made about the year 1988. Barry Smith, the New Zealand evangelist, said that the book bearing the title to that effect was not selling too well these days!

We must instead prepare ourselves for the Lord's return so that when he is revealed, we shall be like him and be able to recognise him. "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure." (1 John 3:3). "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Matth. 24:44).

THE PATIENCE NEEDED IN DEALING WITH OUR BRETHREN

"Don't grumble against each other, brothers" (v.9). Be patient with each other – not for paternalistic reasons but because we are part of each other.

The sentiment has been expressed that:

" To live above saints we love
Oh, that will be glory
To live below with saints we know
Well, that's another story!"

We are a community of sinners who have been saved by grace. So we are saints but not as we will be hereafter. We need to learn to live with each other here and be patient with one another.

Sam mentioned examples of the devastating effects of intolerance and of a critical spirit amongst believers.

We have the instruction in Matthew 18: 15-27 on how to deal with fall outs amongst one another : Jesus knows us so well! Sam shared with us his practical experience of the application of these verses from Matthew 18. Take up any issues directly with your brother (not in writing)! If he does not listen, take one or two others along. If he refuses to listen then, take it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, "treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector."

PATIENCE NEEDED IN THE FACE OF SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION

Job is our example of the virtue of showing unfailing patience in the face of adversity. Despite all that befell him, he remained faithful to God and God blessed him richly for his faithfulness.

In this context, Sam referred to the warning Jesus gave of the desolation that comes from the persecution of the faithful : Matthew 23:38,

In 2 Chronicles : 36, we see an example of the outcome for those who mock and misuse the messengers and prophets of God.

Sam concluded his lesson on this aspect by referring to the case of a young man who was afflicted as a child by infantile paralysis and yet had grown up to be optimistic and friendly as a young man in college. When asked how he managed to retain his spirit he answered: "The disease never touched my heart".

What an example! Like Job, he managed to keep his faith in God.

*Footnote

Egs. The return of the Israelites to the Promised Land; and the reference by Luke to the fig tree and the blossoming of all trees, which is taken to be a reference to the achievement of independence by countries and a portent of our Lord's coming again.