

## *The Letter of James: Chapter Five*

**James 5:1** Come now, you rich [ masculine plural of the noun, πλούσιος (*plouúsios*) ], weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. (NASB)

1. When James begins chapter 5, he had spent four chapters, including 88 verses, exposing the reversionism that dominates a large majority of members in his congregation. He is now going to add 20 more verses before he is done.
2. The sad synopsis, at this point in his Letter, is summarized by this chapter's first verse, which classifies some members as being rich, but who will "weep and howl for the miseries which are about to come upon them."
3. All manner of circumstances will soon come to pass that will be a far cry from happiness. The souls of these reversionists are so far removed from reality that only material things are considered as resources for their happiness.
4. Four chapters have now been taught by James yet, by Chapter Five, no progress has been made in their souls' cognizance of how true happiness is achieved.
5. Their emphasis is focused on "stuff." Here is a partial list of things the chapter initially indicates are sources of the misery they have suffered by the loss of material things: "(1) your riches have rotted, (2) your garments have become moth-eaten" [v. 2], (3) "your gold and silver have rusted, and (4) their rust will be a witness against you" [v. 3a].
6. Again, James continues his analysis by emphasizing the principle that no individual believer has the gift of prophecy. Regardless of the circumstances, every person makes his decisions based on information resident in his stream of consciousness.
7. This information is the only resource he may consider in making decisions. If the resident information in his soul contains guidance from Bible doctrine, then it, plus establishment viewpoint, can provide guidance.
8. However, if one's inventory of doctrine is sparse and overwhelmed by facilitated principles of human viewpoint, human good, and evil, then resultant decisions will produce the summary James cites in verse one.
9. In our study of Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," the author's summary conclusion reads,



**“I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference.”**

10. The reader of this poem is free to exegete these last two lines because he is not Robert Frost. In our analysis, we concluded that the choice made had a positive result.
11. Every human being, from Adam to the last birth on earth, is born with free will. He may choose from an enormous number of options throughout his life. The option for salvation and resultant eternal life is left to the volitional will of each individual.
12. In essence, at the moment of physical birth, every person is born with an option: Place one’s personal faith in Jesus for salvation and eternal life or choose to not do so with the result of eternal incarceration in the Lake of Fire.
13. I submit that Frost’s poem may be regarded as evangelistic. Yet, every person is born with a volitional option regarding which road to travel: **(1)** salvation and eternal life or **(2)** remain lost and without hope.
14. Therefore, I propose that Frost’s text allows Scripture to have the first option of faith alone in Christ alone.
15. From the unbeliever’s perspective, each road looked “just as fair” as did the other, both having been worn “really about the same.”
16. In Frost’s third verse, he reports, “I kept the first (road) for another day!” Yet knowing how way [the path chosen] leads on to [its particular] way, “I doubted if I should ever come back.”
17. This denouement presents a choice that causes each “way” to have its own independent “objective.” This caused him to surmise that the way he chose would not allow him to come back.
18. The final verse begins with the presentation of a word that has two meanings: “I shall be telling this with a sigh.” It can be interpreted differently if the word “sigh” is a noun or a verb. As a verb, it can mean a deep audible breath of weariness, to yearn or grieve. As a noun it expresses an emotion or feeling of relief. The word “sigh” can go either way and thus leaves the individual with the option to choose one or the other.
19. The conclusion for which way Frost’s choice led him is suggested by the final two lines of the poem:

**“I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference.”**



20. Poetry often allows the reader to assume his own interpretation of its meaning. I have chosen to impute to the poem the gospel of salvation which permits one's volition to execute a positive or a negative response.
21. In all of human history, each person, at some point in his life, will encounter the moment of a critical choice, characterized by the line: **"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,"** which resulted in a dilemma: **"And sorry I could not travel both"**
22. We cannot assume for Frost's denouement: "the final outcome of the main dramatic complication in a literary work; the outcome of a complex sequence of events"<sup>1</sup>—that his choice **"has made all the difference"** resulted in salvation and eternal life.
23. However, there is a legitimate way that we may assume for our own application the use of poetic license: "the freedom to depart from the facts of a matter or from the conventional rules of language when speaking or writing in order to create an effect."<sup>2</sup>
24. Thus, I assume the liberty of imputing to Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," the following conclusion to verse 4: **"I shall be telling this with a sigh"**.
- When the word "sigh" is a noun, it can express an emotion or feeling of weariness or relief. The application for us is "relief," which is the result of realizing that by faith alone in Christ alone, he not only has eternal life, but he also will go to heaven when he dies.
25. Frost continues with his denouement:  
**"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by"**
26. The road "less traveled by" is the choice for eternal life through faith alone in Christ alone.  
**And that [volitional choice] has made all the difference."**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "denouement:" *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), 333.

<sup>2</sup> "Poetic license:" *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, eds. Elizabeth J. Jewell and Frank Abate (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1316.

<sup>3</sup> Lines quoted in blue on this page are cited from Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken" from *You Come Too* by Robert Frost. Copyright 1916, 1921, 1923, by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Copyright renewed 1944, 1951 by Robert Frost. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., in *Adventures in American Literature*, Edmund Fuller and B. Jo Kinnick; series ed., Mary Rives Bowman (Chicago: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), 252-53.



27. Yet, there are those in James' church in Jerusalem who, although saved, have chosen the road "most traveled by," portrayed by James in his Letter and because of this he constantly berates the parishoners.
28. James is teaching them about how to live on the road "less traveled by" while their road "leads on to way" in the throes of reversionism.
29. Frost's poem is an excellent dossier on those whose "way leads on to way" in James' church. He wants them to take the road "less traveled by" while they want to keep on doing what they have always done, and with no letup.
30. Thus, James 5:1 works out a title for "more of the same" from James. He wants them to travel the road to spiritual maturity while they are determined to continue on the road to ruin.
31. He doesn't rip them up at first, but yet he scolds them. The verse begins with the present active imperative of the singular verb, ἄγω (*ágō*): "to lead forth," is the basic idea, but James' approach is to use the verb idiomatically.
32. He follows it with the temporal adverb, νῦν (*nún*): "now." Together it functions as an exhortation implying that which should be "done now, at once, or on the spot."
33. James is scolding these men with the command, "Aw, come on now!" This is followed by his identification of those he is addressing with the masculine plural of πλούσιος (*plousios*): "you rich, wealthy men."
34. They are rich, wealthy, well-fixed, and prosperous. I once encountered a certain rich man in Troy, Alabama. My father was not one of them, but he wasn't poor either. He made a good living because we wanted for no necessity.

There were some locals who did have a lot of money. One lived in a big house on North 3-Notch Street which was between Court Square to the south and where my grandparents lived to its north on Orange Street. When a child, if my dad wanted to go somewhere, he walked and, on occasion, his route took him past this rich man's house. One day, as he was walking by, the rich man was sitting on his front porch eating a peach with a basket of peaches by his side. He said to my Dad, "If you can pick up this basket of peaches and carry it home, you can have the peaches." Of course, my Dad could not do that so the man responded, "Maybe when your older you could give it a try," as he continued to eat his peach. My Dad had a term for that man and others like him. He called them, Mr. Got Rocks. This man had many rocks, and it wasn't just for bragging. He was super rich and thus had numerous "rocks".

