

Women's Bible Study

November 6, 2019

James 5:1-6 Warning to the Rich Oppressors

James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

James is addressing this epistle to the twelve tribes of Christian Jews scattered among the nations. James proclaims the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich. Today's money will be worthless when Christ returns, **so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom.** Money is not the problem; Christian leaders need money to live and to support their families; missionaries need money to help them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively. It is the **love of money** that leads to evil and causes some people to oppress (mistreat) others in order to get more. This is James' warning to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards as well as an encouragement to all those who are oppressed (mistreated) by the rich.

Romans 12: 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Jesus warned in **Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Ye rich men - Not all rich men, but only that class of them who are specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists

peculiarly among the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used.

Weep and howl - Greek: "Weep howling." This would be expressive of very deep distress. The language is intensive in a high degree, showing that the calamities which were coming upon them were not only such as would produce tears, but tears accompanied with loud lamentations. In the East, it is customary to give expression to deep sorrow by loud outcries. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary.

So it speaks of a verbal, vocal, loud, lamenting, wailing kind of sorrow, strong emotional outbursts as people see the inescapable damning judgment of hell facing them; that's the idea.

Luke 6:24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

1Timothy 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

James 2: 2-6 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court?

Luke 16:11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

James 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.

Some of the rich people put their money and their fortune into garments. The word “himatia” is the Greek word for garment. (New Strong’s Concordance] “It refers to a loose, long, outer robe that they would sometimes embellish with embroidery and jewelry. These robes were passed on as heirlooms and could literally be worth a fortune. And, of course, when those garments were folded and stacked somewhere, the larva of moth could ruin them. And so if you’re stockpiling your treasure in grain, it’s going to rot, given enough time. The same is true for garments.” *Sermon by John MacArthur*

The apostle Paul says in Acts 20:33 I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or apparel.

Paul’s life is a good example to us. He was a tentmaker, and he supported himself with this trade. He worked not in order to be wealthy, but to be free from being dependent on anyone. Paul was satisfied with whatever he had, wherever he was, as long as he could do God’s work. *NIV Notes*

Do we focus more on what we don’t have than on what you do have?

Matthew 6:19-21 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Isaiah 50:9 Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up

Job 13:28 Man wastes away like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.

James 5:3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last few days.

Another word for corrosion is cankered. The New Strong’s Concordance defines canker as an ulcer-like sore, erupting from below the surface, like rust erupts in metal.

Barnes Notes on the Bible state that your gold and silver is cankered. That is, that some have heaped together, by injustice and fraud, a large amount, and have kept it from those to whom it is due.

It is true that gold and silver do not properly rust, or become oxidized, and that they will not be corroded like iron and steel; but by being kept long in a damp place they will contract a dark color resembling rust in appearance. In this verse James speaks of corrosion as the result of hoarding riches. *NIV notes*

The rust is personalized not only to be a witness, but the executioner, and James says, "It'll eat your flesh as it were fire." In the Day of Judgment, the rust of your hoarded goods will rise up to testify against you and become the fire that burns you flesh. *Sermon by John MacArthur*

James 5:4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cry of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

Deuteronomy 24:19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

(This scripture reminds me of the story of Ruth, who was able to obtain food for herself and Naomi by gleaning behind the reapers in Boaz's field.)

James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

The wicked rich are like cattle that continue to fatten themselves on the very day they are to be slaughtered, totally unaware of coming destruction. *NIV NOTES*

Let's read the story about the young rich man:

Matthew 19:16-23 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

This young rich man is seeking assurance of eternal life, but Jesus pointed out that salvation does not come from good deeds unaccompanied by love for God. Instead of adding another commandment to keep or good deed to perform, the young man needed to submit humbly to God. But instead he walked away.

Why did the young rich man walk away?

Matthew 13:44 (The Parable of the Hidden Treasure) “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:45 (The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Luke 8:5-8, 11-17 (The Parable of the Four Soils) A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts. So that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by preserving produce a crop. No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that

will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.”

When the light of the truth about Jesus illuminates us, it is our duty to shine that light to help others. *NIV Notes*

Consider how has God’s Word taken root in your life? What kind of soil are you?

Proverbs 11:28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Psalm 49: 5-6 Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?

Psalm 62:10 Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

Innocent men were defenseless persons, probably poor laborers. Poor people who could not pay their debts were thrown in prison or forced to sell all their possessions. At times, they were even forced to sell their family members into slavery. With no opportunity to work off their debts, poor people often died of starvation. God called this murder. Hoarding money, exploiting employees, and living self-indulgently will not escape God’s notice. *NIV notes*

James 4:2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for

themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

How do you store up treasure in heaven?

1 Corinthians 3:10-13 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one's work will become manifest (evident), for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

What does the gold, silver and precious stones represent as compared to wood, hay and straw?

In the church built on Jesus Christ, the precious stones represent each church member standing as mature, spiritually sensitive, and doctrinally sound. The wood, hay and straw represent those who are immature, insensitive to caring for another's and vulnerable to unrighteousness. *NIV Notes*

Proverbs 10:22 The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

All of us have some wealth to manage; and it varies from person to person by God's design. And God can bless us in different ways, giving some of us more and some of less than others. It's not wrong to possess it, but obviously it's wrong to misuse it. When, however, your heart is perverted and the love of money controls you, then it leads to all kinds of evil. If you serve money, you don't serve God. If you are laying up all your treasure on earth, that's where your heart is. It's that simple. *John MacArthur's sermon*