

Wasted Living - James 5: 1-6 2.19.2020

Turn in your Bibles tonight to James Chapter 5 and we will be studying verses 1 through 6. Just a reminder though that what we see through this book is a book that describes tests. Tests for what? What James is writing here are tests for those during this 1st Century church and for us today, for them, for us to make sure we are truly Followers of Jesus Christ. James, being led by the Holy Spirit was writing to these Christians, primarily Jewish Christians, to make sure what they are professing is a reality in their life.

So tonight, we are looking at another test. What we are going to look at tonight is a warning, really a chastisement, that James is giving to the rich people of that day in the usage of their wealth. Some of you are already groaning, going, "Oh no! Here comes another sermon about money and how we are not giving enough! On the contrary! I want to commend you. We have a very generous church! Of course, there are always going to be needs and we are always looking to the future to best get the Word of God in front as many people as we can throughout the World. So, yes budgets will continue to increase, and our giving must also. As we, a body of believers work together as a team to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world.

What we are going to look at is another heart condition so, back to our text for tonight. Yes. We are going to see a warning to the rich but being rich or having wealth is not a sin or evil. It is the way that we use our wealth that can become a sin and a stumbling block to our lives.

Before we get into what the Holy Spirit had James to write here, I would like for us to look at a companion passage of Scripture in 1 Timothy. Turn to 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Now, Timothy is in Ephesus and the Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy to encourage him and to give him advice on different situations Timothy is having to deal with in the Church at Ephesus. Just as we see here in James, Timothy is having to deal with this idea of the use of wealth for the Kingdom of God. Let's read from 1 Timothy Chapter 6 verses 6-10.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 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. 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.

This is a good starting point with what we will see tonight. But again, wealth is not evil or sinful but the craving of wealth, the desire of wealth can lead people to all kinds of evils. As the verses said it can lead to a temptation and be snared, entrapped, to the point that their wealth will be the focus of their lives of how can I get more and it causes a life of grief and consuming sorrow as related to the phrase in verse 10 of many pangs. Enough is never enough.

Even those that we may categorize as poor can still be greedy. As they look around and see all the stuff others have. It can create an animosity, a jealousy and a lifestyle to where they live above their means and brings all kinds of struggles into their life.

What we are going to see once again is a heart issue! All sin is an expression of what is in our heart and whether we have true relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn back to James Chapter 5 and we will now look at how they misused their wealth and the consequences that can come.

James 5:1-6

¹Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your 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 days. ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵You have lived earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

As you look at these verses, we see James is really trying to get these people's attention. The words, "Come Now" are like saying, "Listen Up". Pay attention to what is being said and the consequences that are going to happen to you if you do not heed these words. Like right now, I want all of you to listen. I want you to hear this.

What we see here again is a cry, a plea for these people to recognize their sin and lament over their sin. In this case a misuse of the wealth that they had. But we know it goes beyond the wealth. It is the heart. The words, weep and howl, are synonymous in what we learned from Chapter 4 verse 8 and 9 when I taught on this portion of Scripture.

James 4:8-9

⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

This is a gut wrenching, deep within sobbing out loud. As I mentioned before it is a that deep hurt that comes from the death of a loved one that we hold so dear. I ask this question again to all of us that I asked about a month ago. Do we mourn over our sin like that? Do we react that way? Do we, "Aww! Lord forgive me!"

Do we mourn over our sexual perversion, which includes the sin of living together and playing like we are married, adultery, homosexuality! Do we mourn over our gossip, our slander, our pride, our arrogance, our thinking we are something we are not, our showing of partiality, or false worship that comes from a mind that is set on the wisdom of the world. As Jesus said about the Pharisees, with our lips we say we are worshipping the Lord but our hearts are far away from God.

James is saying, "You that are misusing your wealth and continuing to store all this stuff up for yourself! Do you not know that there is an eternity coming?" You know Jesus had some words to say about that. Turn to Matthew Chapter 6:19-21. As you are turning, this is Jesus teaching and what do we find in chapters 5 through chapter 7 of Matthew? There is a particular name we call these teachings of Jesus in these chapters? The Sermon on the Mount! What we are going to look at is a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. If you compare the letter James has written here, to the Sermon of the Mount, you will be able to find a lot of similarities.

You should be there by now. Let's read Matthew Chapter 6, verses 19-21.

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, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is exactly what James is warning against. Don't store up treasures here! Use your resources so that others can hear the Gospel and come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord! What we just read shows how James also uses some of the same terminology in describing what happens to the riches if we hoard them. Before we get into that though, let's describe what being rich here is in this instance. What signified a person being rich? \

- 1. The person had a considerable amount of land.**
- 2. Large amount of grain.**
- 3. Large amount of clothing.**
- 4. Large amount of money.**

Turn back to James if you aren't already there and let's look at verses 2 and 3.

James 5:2-3

²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your 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 days.

What we are going to see here are three effects of the hoarding of their resources. During this time because it was a very much an agrarian society. Meaning most people made their money from farming. Those with a lot of fertile land were very wealthy and could store up a lot of grain. But instead of continuing to try to sell it or even give the excess away they would hoard it and it would not be used.

As the grain sits there the grain would just rot. The actual Greek word being used in this verse for rotted means to putrefy. When it putrefies it gives off a vile stench and then permeates through the good grain that may be around it. Given enough time the grain is going to rot, and it is no longer good for anything. It is not even useful to the owner!

Secondly, we see the rich had large amounts of clothing. So, as they could stockpile grain that would rot. They could stockpile garments that could become moth-eaten. How many have you pulled out a sweater that you had stored, and you hold it up and it has all these little holes in it. Look at this! Talk about moth-eaten.



These rich people had such a stockpile of garments that they couldn't wear them all! Kind of like this closet!



Look at that! What is that in the middle? A throne? No, Seriously! The garments would be stacked one upon the other and the moths and larva would get in them and eat away at the material. Third, we see that their money corrodes. During the 1st century they did not have paper money. Their currency was in metals. It is mentioned a lot in Scripture about silver and gold. But not all of it was a pure metal and some had an alloy mixed in that would cause the coin to be prone to rust. Just like these coins from 1st century Rome.



You can maybe better relate to your silverware tarnishing. As you look at this picture.



The point is very basic here. Why store up? Why hoard your food, your clothes and your money when it all will rot? This goes back to the point made in Matthew 6. Do not lay up treasures here on earth but lay up treasure in heaven! Put your resources towards building God's kingdom and not your own!

Remember from Matthew 19, when the rich young man came to Jesus? What did he ask Jesus? Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? What did Jesus tell him? He went over the a few of the ten commandments. Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness (Lie), Honor your father and mother, love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said! I have done all these things! What do I lack? Those that Jesus listed had a to do with dealing with people. He felt he was doing pretty good at that!

Jesus said, "Go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me." What happened? The young man turned away, sorrowful, because he had great possessions. He was hoarding! He was storing up to build his kingdom and not God's. In this Jesus is telling him that there is an eternity waiting! Look back at James Chapter 5 verse 3.

James 5:3

³Your 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 days.

What is this saying? That I may have some corroding coins in my pocket and the rust is burning through my clothes and burning my skin. No! Because of making the things of this world your God! Because, of the neglect of God! Because of not repenting of your sins and surrendering your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you were to die you would end up in hell where Jesus said, may I remind you, Jesus said, there would be the weeping and gnashing of teeth! In Matthew alone Jesus mentioned this 5 times. That you will go where there is a fire that is unquenchable. You will find this in Matthew 3 and in Mark 9.

May I reiterate that having wealth, saving money and having a retirement is not sinful. There are people that give a lot of their money to many good causes. But even in that fact, it does not show a repentance of sin and being a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

What we once again are talking about here is the heart! Once we truly repent of our sins and surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, we own nothing. Honestly, we own nothing anyway! Our lives, our material goods, our families! They are God's! When we say he is sovereign, that is exactly what that means. If we have surrendered our lives to Jesus, then our life becomes one big expression of worship.

I said it before, and I will say it again. Worship is not an event! Worship is not just because there is music! Worship is just because the music is loud, and the lights are bright and the goose bumps or goosing! Worship is a posture! Worship is a lifestyle! Are you worshiping tonight? I hope so, because of this one reason. His word is being taught.

Romans 12:1 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Our lives are to be an expression of repentance, faith and obedience. All of that is an overflow of a heart of thanksgiving for what Jesus has done for us on the Cross of Calvary.

As I said, how we use our resources is an expression of our heart, and expression of our worship. So, is how we treat other people. We see in verses 4 and 6 how these people had received their wealth. Look at verses 4 and 6 of James Chapter 5.

James 5:4

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

James 5:6

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

May I remind you that this letter is being written to Jews that have professed Jesus Christ as Lord. James is once again providing a test to people within the Church to do an introspection of their own lives to make sure they are truly in the faith.

The fact that these are primarily Jews is why verses 4 and 6 would be very familiar to them. For the sake of time just look at the screens. In Deuteronomy, within the law that was given to Moses they were commanded on how they were to treat those that worked for them and other people when it came to judicial matters.

Deuteronomy 24:15

⁵You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the Lord, and you be guilty of sin.

There's the law. But they would either not pay their laborers the full wage or would not pay them at all. (**Day Earners**) Verse 4 says the one's you are defrauding are crying out to you. What does that mean? They are seeking justice. They are seeking what was rightfully theirs. That could end up in court.

In Deuteronomy Chapter 17 verses 8 through 13 we see how cases were to be handled in the courts. But as we know in many cases the rich can control the courts. That is another way that these rich people would defraud the poor or these laborers. James has already mentioned this when he was talking about partiality in Chapter 2. Look at James Chapter 2 verses 6-7.

James 2:6-7

⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

They have done whatever they needed to do to keep their wealth. This brings us back up to verse 5 of Chapter 5.

James 5:5

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

Remember we are talking about the complete misuse of riches. Upon the backs of the poor. Upon the backs of those they defrauded they lives in luxury. Self-indulging in every pleasure from this world they could think of. Stockpiling food, clothing and money to the point that it is going rot. Whatever you wanted you bought it. They have made themselves a fat cat like this one.



Look at thing! My goodness! Seriously though. This is a very sobering verse. The prophet Jeremiah described this Chapter 12 verse 3. Look at the screens.

Jeremiah 12:3

But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.

Just like these 1st century readers, I would say many of us are very aware that many animals are fed and fattened up for one reason. Food! Now for these 1st century readers it would be for food or a sacrifice. Because they were to bring their best lamb, their best cow for the sacrifice.

In this verse James uses an imagery to drive home the reality of the coming judgment. In a time of great need, these wealthy people had lived out lives of luxury and self-indulgence. They had used their wealth to provide for themselves the easiest, softest lives possible. In doing so, they had fattened themselves, or their hearts, for the day of slaughter.

What is this day of slaughter? Please turn to the Gospel of Luke and Chapter 16. This is a very familiar portion of Scripture. This describes an actual relationship between a Rich Man and a poor man named Lazarus. And what happened to them at their time of death. Luke Chapter 16 verses 19-25.

Luke 16:19-25

¹⁹“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man

died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

The rich man had it all in this life! How many times did the rich man walk by Lazarus and did nothing for him? He lived in luxury and self-indulgence and ended up with nothing!

Turn Luke Chapter 12 and verse 13 to 21. Now this is parable because Jesus is teaching against covetousness and he tells this parable about a very wealthy landowner, who had a large amount of grain, which would produce for him the capability of having large amount of clothes and money.

Tell the parable!!

Here are the verses I want to focus on. Verse 20 and 21.

Luke 12:20-21

²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Once again, we see this warning from Jesus about what James had written down and was having to address in these Churches.

I had to teach these verses in context but really this comes full circle to all of us. Because some of you maybe sitting out there or watching tonight and you are saying, "Pastor Dale, I don't have a plug nickel to my name!" I just trying to scrape by. Rich or poor! Famous or not! We all have one thing that is very valuable to God!

That is our life our soul! Romans 12:1! I appeal to you brothers (and sister) that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Our bodies, yes physically because we can do a lot of unholy things with our bodies. Our minds! Our souls! Jesus said this also! What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul! Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul!

Are you wasting your life because you are seeking to be rich in this world or rich towards God? Don't waste your life on treasures of this world, when you gain everything with Jesus!!!