THE MADNESS OF MATERIALISM

JAMES 5:1-6

10-28-2020

*** BEWARE OF GREED!**

Why such a warning? 2 Reasons:

I. THE GREEDY PERSON WILL NOT ESCAPE GOD'S JUDGMENT (V. 1-3)
(The Verdict Declared)

A. HIS JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN (V. 1-2)

1. You might as well start crying now (v. 1)

2. You might as well kiss your wealth good-bye (v. 2-3a)

B. HIS JUDGMENT IS CORRECT (righteous) (V. 3)

1. Your own wealth will witness against you (v. 3b)
(Money's Testimony)

2. Your own wealth will destroy you (v. 3c)
(Money's Torment)

II. THE GREEDY PERSON WILL NOT ESCAPE GOD'S NOTICE (V. 4-6)
(The Evidence Disclosed)

A. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE DISHONEST IN YOUR PURSUIT OF WEALTH
(V. 4) (To pursue your wealth, you are stealing from others)

B. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE SELFISH IN YOUR ENJOYMENT OF WEALTH
(V. 5) (To enjoy your wealth, you neglect others)

C. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE CORRUPT IN YOUR PROTECTION OF WEALTH
(V. 6) (To protect your wealth, you hurt others)

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INTRO: James is following up on what he has just said. He addresses those who confidently plan to get rich without considering the will of God (4:13-17), and succeed in their plan.

The people James now addresses are unbelievers; there is no mention of "brethren" until v. 7. James speaks of the unsaved, lost rich man to give a lesson to the saved--that is, Christians "who would wish to be rich."

Read I Tim. 6:6-11 (* v. 9).

Jesus said: "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15 NASB).

"Greed (covetousness) is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

NOTE: Poor people are in as much danger of being greedy, as rich!

*** "BEWARE OF GREED!"**

Why such a warning? 2 Reasons

I. THE GREEDY PERSON WILL NOT ESCAPE GOD'S <u>JUDGMENT</u> (V. 1-3)
(The Verdict Declared)

God is not opposed to people simply because they are <u>wealthy</u>; He is condemning them because they have made it their life's goal to be wealthy. Because this was what they lived for, they revealed detestable character--they were greedy!

A. HIS JUDGMENT IS <u>CERTAIN</u> (V. 1-2)

1. You might as well <u>start crying now</u> (v. 1)

Typically, these type of people live as if there is no God, no judgment, no eternity, no heaven or hell, but James warns of a misery that is coming.

Rich men don't see their reality. Money is like <u>novocaine</u>. It numbs you regarding the life after this one.

Because they are unsaved (as evidenced by what their god is: money), they ought to be weeping now.

Severe trouble and misery are coming for the one who lives for money.

Read Luke 16:19-26 - The rich man who went to hell.

- Eternal torment (v. 23)
- Eternal unfulfilled desire (v. 24)
- Eternal memory (v. 25)
- Eternal separation from God (v. 26)

"Weep" = to cry out loud

"Howl" = to continually moan with agony (these are the sounds that will be heard in hell)

James calls on the greedy to weep and howl now because perhaps if they would realize/see that one day they are going to lose all, maybe they would repent. But the point is that God's judgment is certain! unavoidable! You will not escape!

2. You might as well <u>kiss your wealth goodby</u> (v. 2-3a)

3 Types of wealth mentioned:

1) food that rots (v. 2a)
2) clothes that are moth-eaten (v. 2b)
3) money that rusts (v. 3a)

a. Food that rots

"Riches" = refers to foodstuffs. The form of wealth is perishable - grain, etc. (cp. Lk. 12:16-20 - the rich man's barn)

"Corrupted" = to decay, rot

b. Garments are moth-eaten
In the Orient, richly embroidered and decorated outer robes (a symbol of wealth) when stored up in quantity would provide a natural home for a larva of moths.

c. Money that rusts
Gold and silver do <u>not</u> tarnish or decay.

This places even more emphasis on this statement and looks at the gold and silver from God's perspective.

In God's omniscient mind, your judgment is so certain, that your wealth is as good as wasted and worthless already.

"Corrupted . . . moth-eaten . . . rust" - shows that riches are temporal and uncertain.

I Tim. 6:17 - "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"

"Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath" (Prov. 11:4)

B. HIS JUDGMENT IS CORRECT (righteous) (v. 3)

1. Your own wealth will witness against you (v. 3b)
(Money's Testimony)

The rust that had gathered upon unused treasures would undeniably point out the greed of its possessors.

The rich would rather prefer to let things rot rather than give them to the poor. Why?

Because giving to the poor is one way of giving to the Lord--and they hate the Lord.

"Witness" - every man will be without excuse at the judgment. Rev. 20 - judgment is according to works. Your works will not lie.

2. Your own wealth will destroy you (v. 3c)
(Money's Torment)

"Shall eat" = future judgment

Rust destroys things slowly, but James says it will be like fire (which spreads rapidly as it destroys).

A terrible picture of doom!

Anyone who makes materialism their god, will spend eternity in hell.

Greed for wealth has taken the lives (and souls) of many people.

"Neither thieves, nor covetous . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:10).

"Eat your flesh as fire" - "Physical terms are here used to describe the burning regrets and tormenting consciences" [Colson, p. 77] (of men who remember their lost, worthless wealth while they suffer in hell).

Practical APPLI to believers: Don't ever envy the rich (wealth is not a sign of God's blessing)

"Heaped treasure together" - Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth . . ." (Mt. 6:19ff).

"Heaped treasure" = to store it up. God gives us money to use for his glory (not merely to have a large bank account. What good is money--Christian--if it is not invested in eternal purposes?)

Of course, there is nothing sinful about saving.

"For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (II Cor. 12:14).

But it is wrong to store up wealth when you owe money to your employees or when you have bills to pay.

"For the last days" = in (cp. v. 5b) the last days. Just 10 years after James wrote this letter, Jerusalem fell to the Romans, and all this accumulated wealth was taken. This is a reference to the time just prior to judgment.

We are living in the last days! (Paul even believed he was!)

In the judgment day, gold and silver will be about as worthless as rusted-out iron!

II. THE GREEDY PERSON WILL NOT ESCAPE GOD'S NOTICE (V. 4-6)

(The Evidence Disclosed)

James now clearly points out the guilt of the greedy. He has declared the verdict (judgment) and now he gives the evidence.

And God is an eye and ear witness to the sinful crime.

A. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE DISHONEST IN YOUR PURSUIT OF WEALTH (V. 4) (To pursue your wealth, you are stealing from others)

"You kept back by fraud" = kept back is (remote agent) as opposed to (direct agent). In other words, these big shots (bosses, owners, etc.) let others keep back (withhold) wages and they did nothing about it.

The Mosaic Law strictly prohibited this type of injustice.

Deut. 24:14-15 - "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be sin unto thee."

"If money talks," said a popular comedian, "All it ever says to me is good-bye!"

"The hire (pay) . . . crieth" - pictures the money continually screaming out for vengeance. (Illus. the phrase "money talks" - joke)

EX: of inanimate things crying out in an appeal against injustice like the blood of Abel (Gen. 4:10) and the sin of Sodom (Gen. 18:20; 19:13).

APPLI: "The laborer is worthy of his hire" Never fail to give to others what they have earned (their pay). Never fail to give to God what He deserves (your offering).

No wrong will ever go unnoticed by God. He keeps accurate accounting books.

"Lord of Sabaoth" = Master of armies; the Lord Almighty. The one who is in full control of the situation. And He is not blind or deaf to what is going on.

You can't hide your dishonesty from God! "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

READ Psalm 139:1-12.

God has all the facts. he does not judge like man does. Nothing can be covered up with God."

For the Christian, honesty is <u>not</u> the best policy -- it is the <u>only</u> one!

B. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE <u>SELFISH</u> IN YOUR <u>ENJOYMENT</u> OF WEALTH (V. 5) (To enjoy your wealth, you <u>neglect</u> others)

"Lived in pleasure" = soft, luxuriously; delicate living, like a king.

"On the earth" - their delights were limited to the things of this world--not God.

Cp. rich man in Matt. 19. He loved his riches. There is a danger in having wealth. It makes us feel like we don't need God.

"Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle . . ."

"Wanton" = wasteful self-indulgence like the prodigal son who spent his substance in riotous living (Lk. 15:13).

Even if you have earned your money lawfully (In the will of God), you must not waste it on selfish living.

Luxury is waste and waste is sin.

"A magazine advertisement told of the shopping spree of an oil-rich Sultan. He purchased 19 Cadillacs, one for each of his 19 wives, and paid extra to have the cars lengthened. He also bought two Porsches, six Mercedes, a $40,000 speedboat and a truck for hauling it. Add to the list 16 refrigerators, $47,000 worth of women's luggage, two Florida grapefruit trees, two reclining chairs, and one slot machine. His total bill was $1,500,000, and he had to pay another $194,500 to have everything delivered! Talk about living in luxury!" (Wiersbe, p. 147).

"Nourished" = to fatten

The picture is of oxen being fattened for slaughter. ILLUS. of how they pump all kinds of chemical junk into animals to fatten them up to get more meat to sell.

"Day of Slaughter" = reference to day of judgment.

"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth" (Prov. 23:4).

You and I may <u>possess</u> many things, but we do not <u>own</u> them. We are stewards, investing these things in eternity and doing God's will.

C. HE KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE <u>CORRUPT</u> IN YOUR <u>PROTECTION</u> OF WEALTH (V. 6) (To protect your wealth, you <u>hurt</u> others)

The rich man has hurt and kills for material goods.

"The love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evil . . ." (I Tim. 6:10).

"Condemned" - <u>judged</u> those who worked for you as guilty for something. The rich can easily <u>pay off</u> the pagan court (judge) and have the innocent put to death (EX. Christ's death - 30 pieces of silver.

"Killed" - Jewish idea: to deprive one of his living (pay) is to murder him (Eccles. 34:22).

EX. of hurting other people over pursuit of money: 1) Defrauding a brother (Corinthians going to <u>court</u> with another brother over money, ruining the testimony of Christ.);2) when someone dies, people who don't get part of the will are jealous.

Living for money will make you do crazy things!

King Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard and had him killed to get it and satisfy his greed (I Ki. 21).

"The non-resistance of the righteous confirms (proves) the guilt of the rich . . ." (Hiebert, p. 294).

CONCLU: In this passage, there is not a word against riches as such, but only against the ungodly way in which they are gained and used.

We are to gain money by hard work (Prov. 6:6) and use it for God's glory.

You can convert the perishable into the imperishable. Because you sacrifice and give money to the Lord's work, many souls have been brought to Christ. Money that went for this building, tracts, missionaries, etc., is for one purpose: that souls be saved and edified.

"Imagine that lovely money when someone will come up to you and say, `Welcome to heaven. I have some wonderful news for you. Do you remember that gift you sent regularly to that missionary society? Well, I was converted through the preaching of a missionary who would not have been in my part of the world if it had not been for your giving. You sent him out to preach the gospel, and I am in heaven as a result.'." (Blanchard, p. 338)

The Bible teaches a principle that what we keep, we lose. What we give to God, we deep, and He adds interest to it.

Gal. 6:7-8 - "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

APPLI. to unsaved: Is. 55:1-2 - "Why do you spend money for non-bread?" Eternal life is a gift.