

## FAITH IN ACTION IS CHARITABLE WITH RESOURCES

**Greetings:** Jesus’s teachings on material wealth can be found on several occasions but their inception is in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus expects our giving (alms) to occur so that we may help others but not in a way that brings glory to ourselves. (**Matthew 6:1-4**) He also prescribes for His followers an anxious-free living—but to do so, we must not be attached to our *things*. James echoes these ideas and, at times, uses similar wording. For instance, compare what Jesus states in **Matthew 6:19-21**: *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...* with what James states in today’s lesson.

**JAMES 5:1-6** Come now, you rich people, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and your silver have corroded, and their corrosion will serve as a testimony against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! <sup>4</sup>Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of armies. <sup>5</sup>You have lived for pleasure on the earth and lived luxuriously; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and put to death the righteous person; he offers you no resistance.

James circles back in chapter 5 to the issues of wealth which he has already confronted in the first four chapters (**1:9-11**; **2:1-7**, **4:13-17**). James 4:13-17 ends with people who arrogantly trust in their own destiny and make plans that do not include God: *your* will versus God’s will. James 5 then begins with those who trust in their riches instead of in God. These are the “greedy rich” whose work does not serve the needs of others, and yet they obtain their riches at the expense of others. James holds nothing back and sounds like an Old Testament prophet, warning of the calamities to come on those rich who 1) Have not considered the Lord in their wealth, 2) Have become rich through illegal gain, 3) Have spent this gain on pleasures {*hedone*} and luxurious living without concern for others. A triple whammy— yet these “rich” are unaware that *the Judge is standing right at the door*.

This lesson about our resources warns of the dangers that come with riches as stated in **1 Timothy 6:9**: *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction*. However, this lesson also gives instructions to the rich and encourages good works which can be accomplished through wealthy, generous disciples of Christ. *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed (1 Timothy 6:17-19)*. James calls the rich to view their wealth through the viewpoint of eternity

## IT'S NOT THE MONEY, IT'S THE GREED

### WHAT DO THE "GREEDY RICH" LOOK LIKE?

- Hoarding which leads to miseries. **5:1-3**
  - Miseries are coming even though they may not be apparent now.
  - Greedy rich take comfort in what they have and are always looking to acquire more, and more, and more... **Luke 12:16-21**.
  - Wealth in ancient days would consist of grains (**Luke 12:18**), garments, and gold (**Acts 20:33**).
  - Grains rot; garments are eaten by moths; and gold (and silver) won't last.
  - Hoarding leads to false comfort and satisfaction and centers around self-dependency and self-pleasure.
- Injustice for withholding due wages. **5:4**
  - James finds these people promising, but not compensating, their laborers.
  - These were possibly the rich rulers (such as the Sadducees) who bore the most responsibility for economic oppression.
  - The Lord of armies (Lord of Hosts/Sabaoth or Lord Almighty) **Isaiah 1:24**, hears the outcry of the wronged and will judge accordingly. **Genesis 4:10, 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:15-16**
- Self-deception because the arrogant believe they are quite secure, when, in fact, they are about to be slaughtered. **5:5**
  - The greedy rich think they are safe: luxury deceives because it indulges self.
  - The rich young ruler in **Mark 10:17-27** proves this point: he SAID he wanted to follow Jesus but wasn't willing to DO what Jesus asked him. This prompted Jesus to say, "*How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!*"
  - The difficulty for the rich to enter God's kingdom is not because of their wealth, but because of their indulgence of self—the sinful pursuit of wealth.

### RICH IMAGERY AND HARSH LANGUAGE DESCRIBE THE GREEDY RICH

- Why weeping and howling? **5:1**
  - Weeping and howling (wailing) mimics the O.T. prophets who spoke of waste and futility for those overtaken by the enemy.
  - The prophet Isaiah poignantly confronts various nations and uses weeping and wailing language—Judgments against Babylon (**Isaiah 13:6**); Philistia (**14:31**); Moab (**15:2**); Tyre (**23:1**); and even the chosen people of God, Israel (**65:1**).



- Howling {*ololuzo*} is an onomatopoeic verb normally attributed to an animal such as a wolf or dog and lends an eerie quality to the miseries the rich will look forward to if their wealth is obtained by illicit means.
- Imagery of the moth flits from Jesus (**Matthew 6:19**) to James. **5:2**
  - Moths swoop in to eat away at clothes that are not being used.
  - Jesus, and James, are referring not only to an abundance of garments owned by the rich—so many that they are not all worn and are food for moths—but all the material items being hoarded by greed.
  - True treasure should be laid up in heaven (this treasure is moth proof). *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* **Matthew 6:20-21**
- Personification paints a word picture of the horror of greed-gained wealth. **5:3, 5**
  - *Your gold and your silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you.* Inanimate objects are testifying against their wrongdoing, just as Jesus spoke, *“I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”* (**Luke 19:40**) The greedy rich cannot hide from God; their victims will cry out to testify of their deeds.
  - *...and will consume your flesh like fire.* The use of hyperbole breathes visionary life into the result of money hoarded and gained in a greedy manner.
  - *...you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* The idea of “feeding” their hearts reflects the fattening of cattle for slaughter, as well as the greedy rich’s destiny.

## RESOURCES ARE NOT JUST MONEY

- Although James addresses the Resources of “*you rich*,” can *rich* be described in other ways?
  - Our entire congregation can be described as rich if we compare ourselves to the world’s population.
  - Americans are in the top 1% of the world’s possession of riches.
- Time— Every person has the same amount given to us by God each day.
  - Being greedy with our time can harm our “works.”
  - Being stingy with our time can desolate our connection with God...not dedicating time to study, prayer, worship, and not investing in others leads to spiritual poverty.
- Influence— What a resource this can be when used wisely!
  - When you spiritually influence people, you help meet their needs for faith, hope, and love by showing them that they can have faith in God, hope for the future, and rely on God’s love for them.
  - Using teaching talents (resources) allows our influence to spread.



The parable of the talents in **Matthew 25:14-30** reflects that Jesus expects us to USE all our resources wisely, GAINING more...so that we can DO more.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Who were these rich that James is addressing in Chapter 5?
- ❖ Why does James reprimand the “greedy rich” to weep and howl?
- ❖ Is there a difference between the “greedy rich” and rich? What does James tell the rich to glory in? (See **1:9-11**)
- ❖ Can a poor man be rich? (See **2:5**) What does James mean in this verse?
- ❖ Do I use my money in a charitable, non-greedy way? To whom does my money actually belong?
- ❖ What resources do I have in addition to money?
- ❖ How can I plan this next week to use my resources in a charitable way for Jesus?
- ❖ James calls the rich to view wealth through the viewpoint of eternity. How might we steward our wealth differently with this in mind?

### Prayer

