

“Riches that Rust”

James 5:1-6

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I. Introduction

- A. Nothing reveals the state of a person’s heart more than his or her view of money and material possessions
 - 1. “Someone called from the crowd...” (Luke 12)
 - 2. Jesus said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15)
- B. In our text today, James is warning the wicked wealthy (for Christians)
 - 1. Not because they were wealthy, but because of the way they got their wealth and what they did with their wealth
 - 2. It is not a sin to have money or wealth
 - a) Money is not the root of all evil
 - b) It is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10)
 - c) The problem is not money; it is when our hearts become covetous

II. Announce Judgment on the Wicked Wealthy (James 5:1)

- A. First, He calls on them to listen
 - 1. “Go to now...” (v. 1)
- B. Who is to listen up?
 - 1. “Ye rich men” (v. 1)
 - 2. Who are these rich men?
 - a) “Unsaved,” “unbelieving,” “wicked rich men”
- C. What does he want these rich men to do?
 - 1. “Weep and howl” (v. 1)
 - 2. It is not an expression of repentance but rather of anguish because of impending judgment
- D. Why do they weep and howl?
 - 1. “For your miseries that are coming on you” (v. 1)
 - 2. The certainty of their judgment is seen in the word “shall” (v.1)
 - a) In the Greek, it is in the present tense
 - 3. The word “miseries” is a strong word, suggesting hardships, afflictions, and wretchedness
- E. Money cannot buy happiness
 - 1. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)
 - 2. No man can serve two masters
 - 3. James is announcing judgment on these wicked wealthy because they amassed their wealth by fraud and cruelty and were spending it in selfish luxury
- F. James now brings four indictments against these rich men (vv. 2-6)
 - 1. He indicted them for hoarding (vv. 2-3)
 - a) Their wealth consisted of three things
 - 1) Grain (your riches are corrupted)

- 2) Garments (your garments are moth-eaten)
- 3) Gold and silver (tarnished)
- b) Is it wrong to save? No!
 - 1) It is wrong to hoard wealth for one's own sinful pleasures with no regard for God or others
 - 2) "The problem is that being sinful men and women, we take what we are given and use it for ourselves at the expense of other people, rather than receiving these things as a gift in trust from God to be used in his service at this direction. We need to learn that we are merely stewards of what God has given and must use what he has given rightly." – James Boice
- c) After his warning to beware of covetousness, Jesus told the parable of the Rich Fool.
 - 1) "Lay not up for yourselves..." (Matthew 6:19-21)
 - 2) Use your resources to advance God's kingdom
 - a. Time
 - b. Talent
 - c. Treasure
- 2. He indicted them for fraud (v. 4)
 - a) God loves the rich and poor equally
 - 1) People are not rich because God loves them more
 - 2) People are not poor because God loves them less
 - b) God does defend the poor who are defrauded by the rich
 - 1) (Deuteronomy 24)
 - 2) (Jeremiah 22)
- 3. He indicted them for self-indulgence (v. 5)
 - a) "Ye have lived in pleasure..." (v. 5)
 - 1) Translates a single Greek word, suggesting a life of luxury and self-indulgence
 - 2) It's a picture of men wallowing in extravagance and immorality
 - 3) "Been wanton" (v. 5)
 - 4) It's the Playboy hedonism of our day
 - 5) "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:1)
 - a. Lovers of themselves
 - b. Without family love
 - c. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God
 - d. Covetousness
 - b) "Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter" (v. 5)
 - 1) Illustration- The fatted calf (Psalm 73)
- 4. He indicted them for murder (v. 6)
 - a) "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10)
 - b) Illustration- Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21)

III. Conclusion

A. What lessons do we learn?

1. That a fixation with material things spawns a miserable quartet in one's life

- a) Hoarding
 - b) Fraud
 - c) Self-indulgence
 - d) Murder
 - e) Don't love money!
- 2. Don't envy the wicked
 - 3. Be patient. Jesus is coming to set things right (vv. 7-8)
- B. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16)