

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 4-19-15 AM NOTES
"PATIENT ENDURANCE"
JAMES 5:7-12
#15 in Series, "James: Practical Wisdom"

James 1:2-4 (NKJV) ² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

1 Peter 2:23 (ESV) "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Luke 9:51b (NKJV) "...He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

I. Patient Endurance in Difficulty (vv. 7-8)

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NKJV) ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."

"Any view of eschatology which eliminates imminency (believers in every age living with the hope that Christ could come at any moment) is in conflict with all those passages which provide hope for suffering believers by anticipating the Lord's coming."
—John MacArthur

II. Patient Endurance in Disappointment (v. 9)

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Romans 14:10 (NKJV) "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 (NKJV) ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

1 John 2:28 (NKJV) "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV) "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

III. Patient Endurance in Disapproval (v. 10)

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Acts 7:52 (NKJV) “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.”

IV. Patient Endurance in Disaster (v. 11)

Job 1:14-19 (NKJV) “¹⁴and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ when the Sabeans raided *them* and took them away--indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ ¹⁶While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ ¹⁷While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ ¹⁸While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”

Job 13:15a (NKJV) “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

Job 23:10 (NKJV) “But He knows the way that I take; *when* He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”

V. Patient Endurance in Dishonesty (v. 12)

“...what does ‘speaking oaths’ have to do with the problem of suffering? If you have ever suffered, you know the answer: it is easy to say things you do not mean, and even make bargains with God, when you are going through difficulties. Go back to Job for an example. The patriarch said, ‘Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly’ (Job 1:21-22). Job...never cursed God or spoke a foolish oath. Neither did he try to bargain with God.”

—Warren Wiersbe

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 4-12-15 AM
“THE ABUSE OF WEALTH”
JAMES 5:1-6
#14 in Series, “James: Practical Wisdom”

Wealth and misery often travel together. One of the problems with Bible passages like James 5:1-6 is that we don't make application to our own lives because we don't think that it applies to us. If I said that the message today is aimed at those who are wealthy, most who are listening would either turn off their ears because they would not think that it applies to them or they would listen with an attitude of, "Go ahead Pastor and lay it on those rich people who oppress others". When we think of the rich, we think of individuals like Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Warren Buffet, and Arab oil sultans. In history, we think of people like the Vanderbilt family, the Carnegie family and the Rockefellers. I was reading about the Vanderbilt's summer "cottage" in Newport, Rhode Island. The walls were sheathed in marble quarried from all over the world. The kitchen alone was about 2,000 square feet. The "cottage" and its surrounding grounds were so large that a staff of 40 people (20 inside and 20 outside) were required to maintain it. The Vanderbilts lived there for about two months out of the year. That's the wealthy! That's the kind of people that James was talking about...right? When James speaks to the wealthy, what he says certainly applies to the Vanderbilts, but let me share some statistics with you. Today, 50% of the world's population lives on less than \$2.50 per day. In addition, 80% of the world's population lives on less than \$10 per day. We tend to think that our little area of the world is all that there is. Some of us who have been in what is called "majority world" countries (formerly known as third world countries) know what real poverty looks like. If you have sufficient food, decent clothes, a home that keeps you out of the weather, and a means of transportation, you are among the world's wealthiest people. I saw one statistic that said if you have money saved, a hobby that requires some equipment (like fishing, golf, or biking), a variety of clothes to choose from in your closet, two cars, and own your own home, you are materially among the top 5% of the world's population.

I am not trying to lay a guilt trip on you and I certainly am not suggesting that the government redistribute wealth. I simply want you to know that compared to the whole world, most all of us listening to this message are wealthy. Also, we need to see that neither James nor the other books of the Bible teach that being wealthy is a sin in and of itself. In chapter 1 we saw that some of the early church members were wealthy. James doesn't rebuke them for being wealthy; he rebukes the other church members who treat the wealthy in a different way than they treat the church members who are poor. **Deuteronomy 8:18a (NIV)** "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..." **Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)** "The blessing of the Lord makes *one* rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." In the Old Testament, Abraham, Job, Joseph, David and Solomon were very wealthy. In the New Testament Joseph of Arimathea who prepared Jesus' body for burial was a wealthy man. What is presented as sin in Scripture is the misuse and love of wealth. **1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)** "For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Our wealth becomes a sin when we love it, hoard it, and treat it as god. Wealth can bless, but it also has in itself the power to corrupt the human heart. Some of the harshest words in Scripture were reserved for the wealthy who abused their wealth. We will see some of those harsh words in James 5:1-6.

I. The Stagnation of Withheld Wealth (v1-3)

Some believe that James was addressing the wealthy non-Christians, but I believe that James is addressing professing Christians and showing them through their view and use of money whether what they profess is real or phony. James begins his denunciation of the wealthy who are abusing their wealth with a message of coming judgment. James' words in this passage are among the harshest words in all of Scripture. He says that when you abuse God given wealth, your Christianity may be phony and you are headed for the judgment of God.

A. Their Riches Are Corrupted (V1-2a)

The word for "weep" in verse 1 means to sob out loud. It was used to describe the grief that took place when someone died. It was also used to describe the reaction that often accompanied intense shame and guilt. The word translated "howl" referred to an outward response that went even beyond weeping. It meant to shriek and scream in anguish. It is translated "wail" in the NIV. Those who have abused their

wealth will respond with wailing, shrieking and screaming at the judgment because their love of money and abuse of their wealth gives evidence that they do not belong to the Lord.

I have already stated that simply having wealth is not a sin in itself, but I need to balance that by saying that wealth is extremely dangerous and it is a good indicator as to whether your profession of being a Christian is real or phony. It is so easy for gold to become god! That explains why Jesus in 16 of the 38 parables He gave dealt with the handling of money and possessions. That is why about 1 of 10 verses in the New Testament is related to possessions. Money and possessions are so dangerous because they so easily steal our affections and begin to control our decisions. Many who seem to love the Lord and His church become financially successful and they totally change. The Lord and His church fades from their priorities and their “success” ruins them. Sometimes they are truly Christians and the Lord brings about His corrective discipline in their lives to bring them back to Him, but sometimes their response to their “success” reveals that they were never truly a Christian. Wealth is so dangerous. Randy Alcorn summarized the danger in his tremendous book on stewardship, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (in my opinion, the best book ever written on biblical stewardship). “Achan’s lust for money and possessions brought death to himself, his family, and dozens of men in battle (Joshua 7). The prophet Balaam would have cursed God’s people for Balak’s payment (Numbers 22:4-25). Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines for a fee (Judges 16). Solomon’s lust for more and more wealth led him to disobey flagrantly the prohibitions of God’s law concerning the accumulation of large amounts of horses, gold, silver, and wives (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). To gain wealth Gehazi lied to Naaman and then to Elisha, for which he was afflicted with leprosy (2 Kings 5:20-27). Ananias and Sapphira withheld money they said was given to the Lord and were struck dead for it (Acts 5:1-11). In the ultimate act of treachery, the materialist Judas asked the chief priests, ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?’ and then betrayed the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50, 27:3-10).” [Randy Alcorn quoted in David Jeremiah, *Turning toward Integrity*, page 152-153].

In the first century, wealth was measured not by retirement accounts or stock portfolios. Wealth was primarily measured by grain, garments and gold. The thing that James is rebuking here is not having wealth, but hoarding wealth. I believe that hoarding wealth is one of the most serious sins committed in the church today. If Christians simply laid back enough money for known future needs and a small pad for unknown needs and gave all the rest of their wealth to kingdom causes, there would be billions of dollars freed up to get the Gospel to the unreached locally and around the world. In our denomination, we have people willing to plant churches in unreached cities in the USA, but there is not enough money to send and support them. We have young adults and senior adults and all in between who are willing to go to the unreached people groups around the world, but there is no money to send them. We can’t justify hoarding of wealth in times like these.

In verse 2 James deals first with the hoarding of grain. The problem is that grain and other foodstuffs rot, and decay and cannot be eaten. The word “corrupted” in verse 2 is translated “rotted” and “ruined” in other translations. In the first century, there were famines and other natural disasters and the result was that there was not always enough food for the poor. James is rebuking the wealthy for hoarding grain way beyond their needs while people are going hungry. The grain and other foodstuffs that they hoard end up just rotting.

B. Their Garments Are Moth Eaten (V2b)

The word for garments here refers to outer wear such as robes or coats. Concern with fashion and fine fabrics is not something unique to our day. The wealthy often had closets full of expensive garments made of expensive materials from exotic places. Remember how Achan was judged in Joshua 6-7 because he stole (among other things) an expensive Babylonian garment? Jacob’s special affection for Joseph was evidenced by giving him a coat of many colors. Paul said in **Acts 20:33 (NKJV)** “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.” Expensive garments were sought after and often coveted by those who didn’t have them. Often expensive garments were handed down as heirlooms. However when hoarded, they were often destroyed by moths. The only Cashmere sweater I ever remember owning was given to me by my wife. I remember how I got it out of the drawer where it had been stored during warm weather and

discovered that it was full of holes where the moths had eaten it. Hoarding is foolish. What's the point in feeding moths and possessing rotted grain? Today's equivalent is hoarding investments only to see the stock market do a 2008 like downturn and lose it.

C. Their Gold and Silver Are Corroded (V3)

The word translated "corroded" is also translated "rusted". Pure gold and silver doesn't rust, but James was using figurative language to describe the worthless nature of gold and silver that is hoarded. It is not accomplishing anything eternal and might as well be rusted. It is interesting that in 70 AD, some 25 years after James wrote this letter, Jerusalem was invaded by the Roman General Titus, and the city was destroyed. The rich and poor alike were stripped of everything that they owned. The riches they had hoarded were taken by strangers and they never saw them again.

Richard Swenson put it this way. "God is honored by funnels and dishonored by sponges. Be a conduit of His blessing, not a dead end. Some increased savings for known future expenses and unknown contingencies seems acceptable. But dead-end hoarding or empire building is not." [Richard Swenson, quoted in David Jeremiah, page 157].

The last part of verse 3 is very important. These hoarded riches "...will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days." The language is from the courtroom. Hoarded riches will be a witness for the prosecution against the wealthy who have hoarded their riches. The hoarded grain will testify, "I could have fed the hungry". The hoarded garments will testify, "I could have clothed the ragged who had no decent clothes to wear." The gold and silver will testify, "I could have financed the support of churches and the proclaiming of the life changing Gospel to the unreached." In the judgment, the professing Christians who were deceived will be judged by God and their rotted grain, their moth eaten garments, and their hoarded gold and silver will be used as testimony against them.

James 5:3 also says what **Ecclesiastes 5:13 (NKJV)** says, "There is a severe evil *which* I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt." The fact that the rich have hoarded goods in the day of judgment will be presented as evidence that they have abused the blessings God put into their hands and treated them not as His steward, but as if they owned it. The phrase "last days" include the time between Christ's first coming and His second coming. The point is that in the days when Christ could return at any time, many have hoarded their wealth rather than put it in circulation to reach the lost in these last days.

John Wesley said, "Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it find its way into my heart."

II. The Seriousness of Wrongful Wealth (V4, 6)

The sin in verse 4 is not in owning land and in hiring workers at a fair wage to work your land. The sin is in using others in an abusive way and not paying them on time, paying them less than was agreed on, or not paying them at all. In New Testament times in Israel, day laborers were an important part of that agricultural economy. In the Old Testament, there were strict prohibitions against withholding their wages. **Deuteronomy 24:14-15 (NKJV)** ¹⁴ "You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether* one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your gates. ¹⁵ Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you." The day laborers depended on the day's wages to feed and clothe their family. They didn't have legal contracts with their employers. James is speaking to the wealthy landowners who were holding back the pay of these poor laborers. The Lord makes clear that He has heard their cries. **Psalms 69:33a (NKJV)** "For the Lord hears the poor..." James borrows a name for God from the Old Testament – Jehovah Sabaoth. That is literally "The Lord of Hosts". The "hosts" refer to angel armies. There will be justice taken on those who gain their wealth from oppressing the defenseless poor. A part of the judgment of God came when the Romans took the land and the wealth from these rich owners in 70 AD. They lost their property and many lost their lives. It is estimated that one million were killed when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Verse 6 implies that the wealthy controlled the courts and there was no earthly recourse for the abused poor. In the Jewish world, to deprive the workers of their agreed on just wages was the same as murdering them. They could not even meet the basic needs of their families. These sinful hoarding rich people would figuratively and literally kill the poor to continue their opulent lifestyles.

The harsh words of James are in the same vein as the Old Testament prophets. **Amos 5:12 (NKJV)** “For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just *and* taking bribes; diverting the poor *from justice* at the gate.” **Jeremiah 22:13 (NKJV)** “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by injustice, *who* uses his neighbor's service without wages and gives him nothing for his work”.

The last phrase in verse 6 shows that the victims of the rich oppressors were innocent of any crime or wrongdoing. It may also indicate their hopelessness in finding recourse for the crimes against them since the unrighteous wealthy landowners controlled the courts.

III. The Selfishness of Wasted Wealth (V5)

Let me reiterate what I said at the beginning of this message. The Bible does not say that it is a sin to be wealthy. The sin comes in hoarding wealth and gaining wealth by taking advantage of others – especially the poor. In verse 5 James deals with those who live in opulence and extravagance. The ESV says, **James 5:5a (ESV)** “You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence.” These who profess to be Christians and yet abuse the poor to gain wealth are not true Christians and verse 5 says that they are headed for the judgment of God like an animal that is being fattened up to take to the slaughterhouse. Often the farmer will take the cow he is going to slaughter and put it in a pen and feed it lots of corn to fatten it up. The cow just enjoys all the excess without a clue that he is going to be slaughtered. Even so the wealthy who gain more wealth by cheating others and bribing others to further hurt the poor. The slaughter is the judgment of God upon the ungodly that is coming in His time.

The context in verse 5 is those who have treated the poor unjustly to gain their wealth. However, I believe that there is an application here to those Christians who may have gotten their wealth legitimately, but use it to live in opulence and extravagance. I am walking on dangerous ground here and I want to be careful. I am not going to delve into the realm of what is opulence and extravagance. If you are a Christian, I am going to encourage you to go to the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about what is “luxury and self-indulgence”. Consider the desperate needs in getting the Gospel out and the fact that we are in the last days when Christ could return at any time. In light of this, is the way you spend God's money as His steward pleasing Him? I can't answer that question for you, but I surely can encourage you to get with God and acknowledge that He is the owner of all and seek His face as to whether your use of His funds are pleasing to Him.

CONCLUSION

C. T. Studd (1860-1931) was a famous cricket player in England and also wealthy. He gave up the fame and gave away most of his wealth and went to China as a missionary. He later worked in India in missions and finally served in Africa in the Belgian Congo. He once said, “Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.” Studd was best known for a poem that he wrote that had this well known verse:

Only one life, twill soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last.