

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY SERIES

“HOW TO AVOID RUSTING OUR SOUL WITH A CORRODED LIFE”

JAMES 5:1-6

Jesus often warned us about the longing for wealth. His brother James picked up that message and deeply speaks to our hearts about the way that the desire for wealth can “corrode” our souls, our lives, and our ministries. It isn’t wealth it is the longing for it and the use of it that is dangerous!

James 5:1-6 1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you. NIV

Consider the world as if it were shrunk down to a community of 1000 persons: In our town of 1000-

- 180 of us live high on a hill called the developed world;
- 820 of them live on the rocky bottom land called the rest of the world.

We, the fortunate 180 on the hill hold 80 percent of the wealth of the whole town,

- we own over half of all the homes in town
- our homes average over two rooms per person,
- we own 85 percent of all the automobiles,
- we own 80 percent of all the TV sets,
- we own 93 percent of all the telephones,
- and we make an average income of over \$ 20,000 per person per year.

The not-so-fortunate 820 people on the bottom

- they get by on only \$700 per person per year,
- many of them on less than \$75.
- they average five persons to a room.

How do we the fortunate group of hill-dwellers use our incredible wealth? Well, as a group we spend less than 1% of our income to aid the lower land. In the United States, for example, of every \$100 we earned in 1997:

- \$26.00 is spent on our homes
- \$18.30 goes for food
- \$17.00 is for health care
- \$12.00 we spend on transportation
- \$7.60 is spent on recreation and amusement
- \$6.80 buys clothes
- \$2.30 is given for religious and charitable uses, and only a small part of that goes outside the U.S.

I wonder how the villagers on the crowded plain (a third of whose people are suffering from malnutrition) feel about us folks up there on the hill?¹

HARD TO LEAVE BEHIND?

Once a wealthy Christian plantation owner invited John Wesley to his home. The two rode their horses all day, seeing just a small part of all the man owned. At the end of the day the plantation owner proudly asked, "Well, Mr. Wesley, what do you think?" After a moment of silence, Wesley replied, "I think you're going to have a hard time leaving all this." The plantation owner was attached to the world he was in. Wesley was attached to the world he was going to².

What good will my treasures³ on earth be when I die? John Piper helped us envision the final irony of materialism: (KAL007). Picture 269 people entering eternity in a plane crash in the Sea of Japan. Before the crash there is a noted politician, a millionaire corporate executive, a playboy and his playmate, a missionary kid on the way back from visiting grandparents. After the crash they stand before God utterly stripped of Master Cards, checkbooks, credit lines, image clothes, how-to-succeed books, and Hilton reservations. Here are the politician, the executive, the playboy, and the missionary kid, all on level ground with nothing, absolutely nothing in their hands, possessing only what they brought in their hearts. How absurd and tragic the lover of money will seem on that day--like a man who spends his whole life collecting train tickets and in the end is so weighed down by the collection he misses the last train. Answer? No good!

James 5: 1-6 Look here, you rich men, now is the time to cry and groan with anguished grief because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. 2 Your wealth is even now rotting away, and your fine clothes are becoming mere moth-eaten rags. 3 The value of your gold and silver is dropping fast, yet it will stand as evidence against you and eat your flesh like fire.

¹ Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 61-62.

² Alcorn, *Money*.

³ Piper, *Desiring God*, p.

That is what you have stored up for yourselves to receive on that coming day of judgment. 4 For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. Their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. 5 You have spent your years here on earth having fun, satisfying your every whim, and now your fat hearts are ready for the slaughter. 6 You have condemned and killed good men who had no power to defend themselves against you. TLB

AVOID WHAT RUSTS YOUR SOUL

This is James' next hard hitting point: An Authentic Christian AVOIDS THE DANGERS OF WEALTH (5:1-6).

They know that

- Hoarded Riches corrode spiritual living v.3, that
- Money Talks to God v. 4. (God watches if you pay your debts, and fair wages to employees. If not the greed cries out for His judgment!) and that
- Luxury Living is dangerous to their spiritual health (5:5-6)

Let's take these six verses apart piece by piece. James 5:1-6

1. ALL OUR WEALTH WILL NEVER BUY HAPPINESS: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Tertullian, a convert to Christianity from paganism said 1,800 years ago, "nothing that is God's is obtainable by money".
2. ALL OUR POSSESSIONS LEFT ON EARTH WILL SOMEDAY RUST AND ROT: 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
3. ALL MISUSE OF OUR WEALTH WILL BE REPORTED TO GOD: 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.
4. ALL GREED WITH OUR WEALTH CRIES OUT TO THE GOD OF JUSTICE: 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.
5. ALL OUR INDULGENT OR LUXURY LIVING WITH OUR WEALTH OFFENDS GOD: 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.
6. ALL NEGLECT OF SHARING OUR WEALTH WITH THE POOR IS AN OFFENSE TO GOD: 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. (NKJV)

JESUS LAID DOWN SOME LAWS FOR LIVING AROUND WEALTH:

The test of our hearts is what our possessions do to our spirits. When you hear of a genuine need in a family, individual or ministry, what does it do to you?

- Do you start thinking of ways to help?
- To stretch your self in such a way as to give more?
- Or does it down deep offend you?

- Do you simmer with a resentment at the thought of being questioned about what is yours?

Jesus said exactly that in His parables. That is why one in seven words Christ spoke are about money and possessions.

1. Sixteen of His 38 Parables focus upon the handling of money.
2. Of the nearly 2,800 verses in the Four Gospels, 288 direct our use and possession of money.
3. Fifteen percent of the Teachings of Christ are about proper and improper handling of our stewardship.
4. In all the New Testament we find there are:
 - Over Five hundred PRAYER references
 - Just under 500 references to FAITH
 - But over 1,000 references to money and possessions.

To God and thus to us His children, Money is an important monitor that points to either Materialism or Godliness.

1. JESUS SAID - NEVER FORGET YOUR MONEY ALREADY BELONGS TO GOD, we are God's stewards: Matthew 25: 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. NKJV (and hid his master's money. NIV)
2. JESUS SAID - GIVING MUST BE PROPORTIONATE TO GAIN MY FAVOR: Mark 12:43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; NKJV
3. JESUS SAID - SELFISHNESS RUINS GIVING: Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. NKJV
4. JESUS SAID - ALWAYS REMEMBER GIVING IS COMPENSATED: Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." NIV Ask people around you that are happy and successful in God's ways and you will find they are sacrificial givers and tithers.
5. JESUS SAID - TEMPORAL MONEY CAN BE EXCHANGED FOR ETERNAL WEALTH: Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. NKJV Luke 16:9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. NIV
6. JESUS SAID - I LOVE AND BLESS GIVERS: Acts 20:35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " NKJV

Think about how frail we are:

- stripped of God's spirit = all we are is dust,
- stripped of God's purpose = all we have is vanity,
- stripped of God's love = all we do is futility

#445 Something for Thee