

Lessons From James

How Not To Get & Be Rich

(Ja 5:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series on the "Lessons From James."
 - a. Last week we looked at **Ja 4:13-17** "Time Management."
 - i. We examined the need to appreciate time appropriately. In other words make sure God is getting the majority of our time.
 - b. This week we are going to look at "How Not To Get & Be Rich."
 - i. We are going to answer four questions.
 1. Who is James addressing in this passage?
 2. What is in store for these rich people?
 3. Why is God so angry at them?
 4. What lessons can we draw from here?
3. Before we get started let this be said...
 - a. God has some very harsh things to say concerning these rich people.
 - b. This does not, in any way however, mean that God condemns people for being rich or that being rich means one cannot enter into heaven.
 - i. Many of the most faithful men in scripture were rich.
 1. Job, Abraham, Joseph, David, Philemon...
4. Jesus does speak of the difficulties of being rich and getting to heaven.
 - a. Though there is no sin in being wealthy it can be very challenging for children of God to be wealthy.
 - i. **Mt 19:16-26** "Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" 17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 19 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" 20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."¹
 - b. As we see it can be a challenge.

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Lessons From James

5. Why is wealth so difficult? Because the love of it is the root of all kinds of evil.
 - a. **1 Ti 6:10** "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."
6. Let us now examine our passage to see "How Not To Get & Be Rich."
 - a. First let us ask the question...

I. Who Is James Addressing In This Passage

- A. Are they Christians, children of God?
 1. This is unlikely for a few reasons.
 - i. James commonly throughout the book address the children of God he is writing to as brethren.
 - a. He uses it 15 times in the NKJV, KJV, ASV.
 1. In the ESV brothers is used 19 times.
 - ii. The rich are never called to repent.
 - a. Everywhere it is clear that brethren are the subject they are called to correct their behavior and thus repent and grow.
 - b. Here we see none of this.
 - iii. James does address brethren in verse 7 but it is encouraging the brethren to be patient based on what was just written concerning the rich.
 - B. These rich are most likely unbelievers
 1. They were ones oppressing the brethren.
 - i. The Lord hears their cries (**Ja 5:4**) and this is to be their comfort even in this difficult situation (**Ja 5:7**).
 2. Judgment was coming upon the oppressors therefore the brethren were to be patient.

II. What Is In Store For These Rich People?

- A. Weeping and howling
 1. Why would they be weeping and howling?
 - i. Their riches would rot.
 - ii. Their clothing would be moth-eaten.
 - iii. Their gold and silver would be corroded.
 2. This would be the evidence against them.
 - i. In other words when these things happened it would be a witness against them for all the Christians to see.
 3. **Je 17:11** "As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool."
- B. This misery of the rich could very well be discussing the destruction of Jerusalem
 1. It wasn't a very long time after this letter we written that Jerusalem was destroyed, possibly only 7 years.
 2. Many of the rich Jews that had oppressed Christians were literally weeping and howling afterward.

Lessons From James

- i. "What they had failed to realize was that they had heaped up treasure "in the last days" (Jm 5:3b)" (Sermon "When God Gets Angry At The Rich" by Copeland, Mark)
- ii. They were just like the "rich fool" ([Lk 12:16-21](#)) who thought we could lay up treasures for later.

III. Why Is God So Angry At Them?

- A. First because of how they acquired their riches
 1. They hired Christians to mow their fields and harvest their crops yet they did not pay them.
 - i. This is fraud at its core.
 - a. [Pr 20:23](#) "Unequal weights are an abomination to the LORD, and false scales are not good." (ESV)
 2. How many people today get rich off being dishonest with those around them?
 - i. Think of all the scams that are out there.
 - ii. Apple recently has been in the news for the extremely poor conditions their workers in China have so that they can make a greater profit and faster products...
- B. Second because of how used their wealth once they got it
 1. They kept all the wealth for themselves with no consideration for others.
 - i. [Ja 5:5](#)
 2. They spent it on themselves so they could live a life of luxury and pleasure.
 - i. Notice the different words different translations have here to describe what they were doing.
 - a. "Ye have lived **delicately** on the earth, and taken your **pleasure...**" (ASV) (emphasis mine)
 - b. "Ye have lived in **pleasure** on the earth, and been **wanton...**" (KJV) (emphasis mine)
 - c. "You have lived **luxuriously** on the earth and led a life of **wanton pleasure...**" (NASB95) (emphasis mine)
 - d. "You have lived an **easy life** on earth. You have **given yourselves everything you wanted...**" (NIRV) (emphasis mine)
 3. They condemned and murdered the righteous.
 - i. Kent Hughes wrote, "James is referring to judicial "murder"— primarily referring to taking away the means of making a living. The landed gentry controlled the courts. The poor could not oppose them because they had no way to use the system, and thus were helpless." (Ellsworth, R. (2009). *Opening up James* (148–149). Leominster: Day One Publications.)
- C. What a ghastly way to treat people
 1. Yet there are many who do the same today.

Lessons From James

IV. What Lessons Can We Draw From Here?

- A. Be righteous in how we obtain money
1. We cannot seek or desire to be rich as that is the root of all kinds of evil.
 - i. **I Ti 6:10**
 - ii. Being rich is once again not a sin but desiring to be is, because it puts trust in something there should be no trust in.
 - iii. It can and usually will lead to many of the problems we are dealing with in this passage.
 - iv. If it leads to this there is no good that comes from it.
 - a. **Dt 24:14-15** "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."
 - b. **Je 22:13** "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"
 2. There are three ways we are to obtain wealth.
 - i. We are to work for it.
 - a. **Gn 3:19** "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."
 - b. **Ep 4:28** "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."
 - c. **II Th 3:10** "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."
 - ii. We are to invest for it.
 - a. **Mt 25:27** "So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest."
 - iii. We can receive a gift.
 - a. **I Co 16:1-3** "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem."

Lessons From James

- B. Be righteous in how we use money
1. To spend it on luxurious living when others are suffering is what this passage is dealing with.
 2. It is an indication of a lack of love and concern for God's creation.
 - i. **I Jn 3:17** "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"
 - ii. Now we are not talking about those that will not help themselves by being poor stewards of their funds.
 - a. They need to have accountability, and simply giving them what they want after they have squandered their means is not compassion but enabling the problem.
 - iii. Keep in mind those oppressed Christians had worked for their wages, they had not begged. It was their wages were not given them.
 3. Let us keep in mind always that the purpose of working is not to obtain wealth but to support ourselves and help those around us that are less fortunate.
 - i. **I Ti 6:17-19** "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
 - ii. **Ac 20:34-35** "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

CONCLUSION

1. Our treasure can never be laid up here on earth but rather it must be stored in heaven.
 - a. **Mt 6:19-20** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."
2. We live in a country where, for the most part, we are very fortunate and this we must be careful about.
 - a. We live in a society where it is fairly easy to become wealthy compared to the world at large.
 - b. We live in a society where covetousness is not considered bad or wrong.
 - c. We live in a society where accumulating large amounts of wealth for one's own personal gain is considered an inalienable right.
 - i. We must guard ourselves against such thoughts.
3. Question: Am I laying up my treasures in heaven or on earth?
 - a. If in heaven continue steadfastly therein.
 - b. If on earth repent, coming back to God and changing your ways.

Lessons From James

4. Invitation²

- a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**

² Brother Mark Copeland's sermon outline on "When God Gets Angry At The Rich" was of great value and used a great deal in the development of this sermon outline.