

James 5:1-6

1. WARNINGS AGAINST TRUSTING IN WEALTH

Luke 16:13-14 **“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.¹⁴ Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.”** Matthew 6:19-21 **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Nothing more clearly reveals a person’s heart than his view of money and material possessions. Many who profess Christ invalidate their claim by a lifestyle that has money and possessions as its foundation. The Bible does not condemn wealth. In fact, everyone possesses wealth and material goods to some degree. In Deuteronomy 8:18 **“But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is this day.*”** Proverbs 10:22 **“It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich...”**. What is wrong with wealth is the misuse of it, Paul made this clear in his letter to Timothy 6:10 **“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”**

Application: James like Paul, warns of the misuse of money and possessions. What God blesses you with tends to be misused for personal satisfaction and gain. We have some lengthy texts that warn against the misuse of wealth and possessions. Cf. Isaiah 10:1-4; Amos 4:1-10

NOTE: James is primarily writing to those in the church. Christians must be aware of the dangers of falling into sins that characterize unbelievers. James begins his forceful pronouncement of impending judgment.

Come now is an insistent call for attention. In our contemporary vernacular it would mean *“listen up, get this or pay attention.”* It was also used in 4:13 to warn against those who were prideful in thinking they controlled things.

Weep and howl, weep means *“to sob out loud, lament”* and howl means *“shrieking or screaming”* and goes beyond the meaning of lament or weep. Weeping was used to describe the *“wailing”* when someone died, Mark 5:38-39 **“They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹ And entering in, He said to them, Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.”**

Taken together these two words describe an intense outburst of despairing, violent, uncontrollable grief. The OT describes such cases. Isaiah 13:6 **“Wail, for the day of the Lord is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”** Isaiah 15:3 **“In their streets they have girded themselves with**

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sackcloth; On their housetops and in their squares. Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.”
Jeremiah 48:20 **“Moab has been put to shame, for it has been shattered. Wail and cry out; Declare by the Arnon, That Moab has been destroyed.”**

The miseries that are coming upon you describes the despair and grief that will come upon those who trust in wealth and possessions. Romans 3:16 is the only other NT use of the word misery **“Destruction and misery are in their paths.”** Cf. Luke 16:19-25

2. THEIR WEALTH WAS USELESSLY HOARDED

Hoarding is one of the most overlooked sins we know. Of course, it is not wrong to save money and prepare for the future. Christians are to provide for their families, **“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”** (1 Timothy 5:8). So the question is why does God bless believers with wealth? To be used for His glory.

Caring for the needy, Galatians 2:10 **“They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.”** 1 John 3:17-18 **“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”**

To support those who minister, 1 Corinthians 9:9-14, Galatians 6:6 **“To the one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.”**

The believer is not to amass a fortune that will be wasted without regard to God’s will. Cf. Psalms 39:1-6; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11, 13 **“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance *with its* income. This too is vanity. ¹¹ When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?...There is a grievous evil *which* I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt.”**

James describes these the way wealth was valued in his day, aside from land and homes. First, he uses the term “riches”. This may describe wealth in general, but James use of the word “rotted” suggests a narrow reference to “foodstuffs”. This term was used to describe “rotted wood, decaying flesh, and rotten meat, fruit or food.” It describes those who hoard food, but in the end will rot and be of no use to anyone. Cf. Luke 12:16-21

Second, garments is used to describe this as well. In biblical times garments were a sign of wealth. But hoarding these was foolish as well. It would be in danger of becoming “moth eaten.” Matthew 6:19-21 **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither**

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moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Thirdly, he uses gold and silver as an example. Hoarding it means it would become rusted and useless. Some suggest this is metaphorical but gold and silver of the day wasn't pure and could contain alloys subject to complete corrosion. None the less, the idea of hoarding is useless.

Hoarding one's possessions, whether food, clothing or money is foolish. All earthly treasure is fleeing. Proverbs 23:4-5 **"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it. ⁵ When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens."**

In closing there is one whom we can trust to secure us and keep us. The promises of God do not fail. He is a provider. Wealth, possessions and things we accumulate do not provide peace. If your hope rests in what you have, your hope is wrongly centered. Psalms 52:6-7 **"The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying, Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And was strong in his evil desire."** Luke 12:15 **"Then He said to them, Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."**

Today is the day of salvation. Make Christ your treasure not possessions.