

Money Talks

James 5:1-6

A comedian once said, "If money talks, all it ever said to me is goodbye." James was talking to the rich in this section. These men were rich and their riches were sinful. They were using their wealth for selfish purposes and were persecuting the poor in the process.

- One of the themes that runs through James 5 is "Trouble." We see poor people deprived of their wages, as well as people who are physically afflicted and spiritually backslidden. But there is a second theme that James introduces: Prayer! Nothing works without it!
- When you join these two themes, you arrive at the 5th mark of a mature Christian: He is prayerful in trouble!! Instead of giving up when trouble comes, the mature believer turns to God and asks for His help.
- The immature person trusts in his own experience and skill or turns to others for help. God can use people to help us but this help must come as a result of prayer and not because you just don't want to face your troubles.
- James did not say it was a sin to be rich. Abraham was rich, the Bible said that he walked with God and was greatly used by God to bless the whole world.
- James was concerned with their selfishness and told them to "weep and wail." Let's talk about a few things concerning their money.
 - First let's talk about the way they got their money.

- The Bible does not discourage the acquiring of wealth. The Jews in Canaan owned their own property, worked it, and benefited from it. What the Bible does condemn is acquiring wealth by illegal means or for illegal purposes.
- Isaiah and Jeremiah exposed the selfishness of the rich and warned that judgment was coming. It is this selfish spirit that James is addressing.
 - The second thing I want to talk about is the way the rich used their wealth.(3-5)
- It is bad enough to gain wealth in a sinful way, but to use that wealth in sinful ways just makes the sin greater.
- Remember, there is nothing wrong with saving and being smart with your money, but James is getting to the heart of the rich guys by addressing their hoarding problem!
- They were selfishly guarding it for their own security and pleasure. The irony in all of it is, not more than 10 years later, Jerusalem fell to the Romans, and all this accumulated wealth was taken.
- Let me ask you a question: What did Jesus mean by, “Laying up treasures in heaven?” Did he mean we should sell everything and give it to the poor? As he instructed the rich ruler? NO! He spoke that way to the young ruler because he knew where his heart is.
- What Jesus meant when he said, “Laying up treasures in heaven” was to use all that we have as stewards of God’s wealth. You and I may possess many things, but we do not own them. God is the owner of everything, and we are his stewards.

- What we possess and use are merely things, apart from the will of God. When we yield to His will and use what He gives us to serve Him, then things become treasures and we are investing in eternity.
- Since we are stewards of God's wealth, we have certain responsibilities towards God. We must be faithful to use what He gives us for the good of others and the glory of God.
- There is a difference between enjoying what God has given us and living extravagantly on what we have withheld from others.
- Luxury has a way of ruining character. It is a form of self-indulgence. If you match character with wealth, you can produce a lot of good; but if you match self-indulgence with wealth, the result is sin.
 - Lastly, I want to talk about what their riches will do.(1-4)
- It is a big mistake to think there is security in wealth. Paul wrote, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on uncertainty of riches." Riches are uncertain! The money market fluctuates from hour to hour, and so does the stock market.
- Add to this fact that life is short, and we cannot take wealth with us, and you can see how foolish it is to live for the things of this world. It is good to have riches in your hand as long as they don't get into your heart!!
- Here is how God views investing; whatever we keep, we lose. What we give to God, we keep and He adds interest to it. So let's be good stewards and use what we have to glorify God and not ourselves.