

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

WARNINGS TO THE WEALTHY – JAMES 1:1-6

1. REVIEW

2. JAMES HAS MENTIONED WEALTHY PEOPLE TWICE BEFORE:

- A. James 1:10-11 (NASB) and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.
- B. James 2:5-7 (NASB) Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?
- C. ... BUT, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME JAMES HAS DIRECTLY ADDRESSED WEALTHY PEOPLE IN HIS LETTER.
- D. NOTE: JAMES IS NOT RIDICULING WEALTHY PEOPLE... HE IS WARNING THEM!
 1. CLEARLY, SCRIPTURE TEACHES THAT IT'S NOT A PERSON'S FINANCIAL WEALTH OR POVERTY THAT DETERMINES THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD... BUT THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION.
- E. NOTE: IN THIS SECTION BEING OUTWARDLY RICH OR POOR REFERS TO HOW MUCH (OR LITTLE) OF THE WORLD'S GOODS A PERSON HAS AT HIS OR HER DISPOSAL.
 1. INWARD WEALTH OR POVERTY REFERS TO A PERSON'S RELATIONSHIP (OR LACK OF RELATIONSHIP) WITH GOD, EXPRESSED THROUGH HIS OR HER LOVE FOR OTHERS.
3. James 5:1 (NLT2) Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you.
 - A. AFTER THAT GENERAL REBUKE, JAMES TURNS TO SOME SPECIFIC REASONS FOR IT... AND HE PAINTS A GRIM PICTURE OF THE WEALTHY UNBELIEVERS' DARK SPIRITUAL CONDITION... AND ALONG THE WAY HE ALSO POINTS OUT THE DIVINE RETRIBUTION THAT COMES WITH THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR.
 1. FIRST: JAMES REBUKES THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH BECAUSE THEY WERE GUILTY OF HOARDING THEIR RICHES.
 - a. James 5:2-3 (NASB) Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

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- b. IN HOARDING RATHER THAN SHARING, THE WEALTH OF THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH “ROTS AND RUSTS”.
- 2. **SECOND: JAMES REBUKES THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH BECAUSE THEY WERE GUILTY OF CHEATING OTHERS.**
 - a. James 5:4 (NASB) Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.
 - b. **ONE SIGN OF THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH IS THEIR RELUCTANCE TO PAY THEIR BILLS.**
 - 1) **IT'S AN AMAZING REALITY THAT SOME OF THE GREEDIEST PEOPLE ARE ALSO SOME OF THE WEALTHIEST... AND SOME OF THE MOST GENEROUS PEOPLE WILL GIVE AWAY THEIR LAST DIME!**
- 3. **THIRD: JAMES REBUKES THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH BECAUSE THEY WERE GUILTY OF A SELFISH LIFESTYLE.**
 - a. James 5:5 (NASB) You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.
 - b. **THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY ARE EATING AND DRINKING JUDGMENT UPON THEMSELVES.**
- 4. **FOURTH: JAMES REBUKES THE UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH BECAUSE THEY WERE GUILTY OF TAKING UNFAIR ADVANTAGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS**
 - a. James 5:6 (NASB) You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.
 - b. **THE “RIGHTEOUS” WOULD NOT ONLY INCLUDE JESUS... BUT ALSO ALL THOSE BELIEVERS ENDURED CONDEMNATION AND MARTYRDOM FOR THEIR FAITH — ALL AT THE HANDS OF UNBELIEVING SELFISH RICH, POWERFUL OPPRESSORS.**
 - 1) **THE “RIGHTEOUS” INCLUDES ALL THE RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE WHO ARE TREATED BRUTALLY BY SELFISH WEALTHY UNBELIEVERS.**

4. **APPLICATION: JAMES 5:1-6**

- A. **PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR ALL BELIEVERS TO FOLLOW:**
 - 1. **PRINCIPLE 1: HOARDED RICHES REAP MISERABLE DIVIDENDS.**
 - a. James 5:1-3 (NLT2) Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like

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fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment.

- b. **IF YOU LOOK INTO THE FACE OF THE UNSAVED SELFISH WEALTHY TODAY... MORE OFTEN THAN NOT YOU'LL SEE STRESS, WORRY, BITTERNESS, AND EMPTINESS.**
- c. **THOSE PEOPLE FINALLY DISCOVER THAT MONEY CAN'T PURCHASE HAPPINESS... ON THE CONTRARY, IT OFTEN BRINGS DESPAIR.**

2. **PRINCIPLE 2: RICHES PROVIDE NO RELIEF IN ETERNITY.**
 - a. **James 5:3 (NLT2)** Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the **day of judgment**.
 - b. **Proverbs 11:4 (NLT2)**
Riches won't help on the day of judgment, but right living can save you from death.
 - c. **ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT, THE SELFISH UNSAVED WEALTHY WILL BE HANDED A BILL THEY CANNOT PAY... AND ALL THEIR EARTHLY TREASURES WILL BE LIKE ASHES BLOWING IN THE WIND.**
 - 1) **ONLY GOD'S GRACE... THE FREE GIFT THAT COMES BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST RESCUES A PERSON IN THEIR DAY OF JUDGMENT.**
3. **PRINCIPLE 3: THE UNJUST ACTS OF THE SELFISH UNSAVED WEALTHY ARE NOT FORGOTTEN.**
 - a. **James 5:4 (NASB)** Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the **Lord of Sabaoth**.
 - 1) **"LORD OF SABAOTH" REFERS TO GOD AS THE JUDGE WHO WAGES WAR AGAINST HIS ENEMIES.**
 - 2) **JAMES'S JEWISH AUDIENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH "LORD OF SABAOTH" SINCE IT WAS BORROWED FROM THEIR NATIVE HEBREW LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.**
 - i. **AND THEY WOULD HAVE CAUGHT ITS ALLUSION TO THE COMING END-TIMES JUDGMENT.**
4. **PRINCIPLE 4: A LACK OF JUDGEMENT TODAY DOES NOT MEAN A LACK OF JUDGEMENT TOMORROW.**
 - a. **THROUGHOUT THIS PASSAGE, JAMES HOLDS THE WARNING OF END-TIMES JUDGMENT OVER THE HEADS OF THE SELFISH UNSAVED WEALTHY.**
 - 1) **THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT IS BEHIND US (CHRIST BORE THE FULL PUNISHMENT OF DEATH, PAYING FOR ALL OF OUR SINS ON**

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THE CROSS)... BUT THE UNBELIEVER'S JUDGMENT IS AHEAD OF HIM.

B. PAUL'S LETTER TO TIMOTHY GIVES TWO MORE PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW:

1. PRINCIPLE 1: GOD'S CONCERN IS NOT WITH ACTUAL WEALTH, WHICH IS NEUTRAL... BUT WITH OUR ATTITUDES TOWARD WEALTH.

a. 1 Timothy 6:8-10 (NLT2) So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

b. GOD URGES HIS PEOPLE TO BE CONTENT RATHER THAN LONGING TO BE RICH.

1) MONEY ITSELF IS NOT THE ROOT OF EVIL... THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL

2. PRINCIPLE 2: GOD IS NOT AGAINST PEOPLE WHO ARE WEALTHY... BUT AGAINST THEIR MISGUIDED PRIORITIES.

a. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NLT2) Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

b. NOTE: GOD BLESSES US FOR THE PURPOSE OF BLESSING OTHERS... NOT ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF SATISFYING OUR OWN SELF-CENTERED PLEASURES.

5. CONCLUSION

A. IF... WE KEEP OUR ATTITUDES RIGHT AND MAINTAIN PROPER PRIORITIES, WE WILL NOT BE LED ASTRAY BY RICHES AND BECOME SPIRITUALLY POOR.

1. HOWEVER... THAT ATTITUDE TOWARD RICHES CAN ONLY COME FROM A GOD-GIVEN HUMILITY IN OUR HEARTS.

a. THE CURE FOR THE PRIDE AND ARROGANCE OF WEALTH IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

B. DISCUSS: DOES THE LOVE OF MONEY AND THE THINGS IT CAN PURCHASE OFTEN LEADS TO PRIDE AND SELFISHNESS.

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