

Pt 14 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Warning of Riches

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 05-16-2018

± James 5:1-6

I want to preface our study tonight by first reading the words of the Lord Jesus in:

Matthew 6:19-24

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

All through our studies in James we have been confronted with whether our faith is genuine or not. James lays it out in the open and tells us how a Christian should be living and what kind of fruit they should produce and what their faith should do if it is genuine. And, if our faith does not hold up to the test then perhaps our faith isn't genuine saving faith and we are only deceiving our own selves.

This teaching that we just read in the Gospel of Matthew of the Lord Jesus, leads us into the reason James wrote what he wrote in his Epistle concerning the rich. Being rich or having wealth is not wrong or sinful, however, the way you obtain those riches and the value you place upon them can be.

James is addressing those that have wrongfully obtained their riches by deceptive or evil ways and instead of it being a call for repentance, it is more of a rebuke or condemnation of them.

1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

The very opening verse is bad news. There is no comfort or relief given, it is just straight out judgment that something miserable is going to come upon these "rich men."

This seems to be a continuation of the things James mentioned in our last study in Chapter 4 concerning boasting about tomorrow and going into such and such city to buy, sell, and get gain. He said all such boasting is evil. The reason being is because it exposes the true heart of man and where his priorities lie. That's the same thing we find in this section dealing with the "rich men."

As I have already said, being rich or having wealth is not sinful, but we find the Bible teaches much about the dangers of riches. For example, the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy says this: **1 Timothy 6:6-10**: But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. - So, it's not the money that is evil, it is the love of it.

James continues in verse 1 saying: weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. As we keep looking through the next verses we see some of the misery that will come upon them:

1. Their riches are corrupted.
2. Garments are moth-eaten.
3. Gold and silver cankered and the rust of them will be a witness against them.
4. Their flesh will be eaten as it were fire.

But there seems to be more implied here than just what we see in these 6 verses. Some Bible commentators believe that James was giving a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem which would occur in 70 A.D. when the Roman Emperor, Titus, invaded Jerusalem and destroyed it along with the Temple.

I suppose that is a possibility, but I think that may be reading more into it than what it is implying. Personally, I believe he is speaking about their own personal destruction and misery that will come up on them because of their faith in riches rather than faith in Christ. We all know what that leads to, death and hell.

Luke 16:19-31

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Four separate times we are told the rich man is in torments.

In verse 23, Jesus said he was in torments.

In verse 24, the Rich man said he was tormented.

In verse 25, Abraham said he was in tormented.

In verse 28, the Rich man said he was in a place of torment.

So, when James tells the rich men to: “weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you,” I think he is speaking of weeping and howling for their impending torment in hell. Weeping and howling are very powerful descriptions of what someone does in deep distress. You better believe they are weeping and howling in hell right now.

You may remember the Rich Young Ruler that is described in the Bible: **Mark 10:17-27** And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

The disciples were astonished at the teaching of Jesus because they all believed that being rich meant that you were being blessed by God and being poor meant that God was not blessing you. For Jesus to tell them that it is harder for a rich man to enter into heaven they were astonished.

Just like the rich young ruler, many rich people rely upon their riches to get through this life. They feel that they are entitled to everything that they want, even eternal life in Heaven. But trusting in riches never saved anyone. That’s why Jesus says in

Mark 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Then James describes what their riches will ultimately bring them; corruption, motheaten, canker, rust, flesh eating. These are all things that seem to be the opposite of riches. The very thing these rich men want to avoid in life is the thing that their riches will bring them, misery.

But the condemning factor for these men is what he said in the last part of verse 3: **Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.**

All these riches that they have they “heaped up.” They didn’t use them to glorify God. They could have used their wealth for righteous purposes instead of heaping it up to just rot away.

We are to be good stewards of what God allows us to have. We are not to heap up riches here on this earth. We see that taught by Jesus over in the Gospel of:

Matthew 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

We are also given a good description of this type of person over in **Luke 12:13-21** And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

Not only did these rich men heap up treasure, but they did not practice honest business practices by paying those that worked for them. These labourers worked in their fields expecting a fair wage but the rich men did not give them a fair wage and withheld it from them.

Because these men have not be dealt with fairly, they cry out to the “**Lord of Sabaoth.**” That is not a misspelling in your Bible. It doesn’t mean “**Sabbath.**” **Sabaoth** is the Hebrew name given to God in a military sense as in **the Lord of the army of Israel.** It is a cry for Him to wage war upon these rich men who have done them wrong. It is the equivalent of the Old Testament name of **LORD of Hosts.**

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

These rich men have lived in the lap of luxury because of their wealth. They have ate to their hearts content like a stalled animal awaiting to be slaughtered.

6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

They had not pity on the poor, just like the rich man in hell had none for Lazarus, and these poor men do not resist, much as Christ did not resist.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version