

Justice and Relief is Coming for the Oppressed and
Persecuted, Hold On!
James 5:1–8

James 5:1–8 (NKJV)

5 Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!*² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.⁶ You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Introduction:

In January 2022, Elizabeth Holmes was found guilty of one of the largest fraudulent schemes to steal from investors to ever hit the pharmaceutical industry and Wall Street. Over 700 million dollars was invested in a company that was all fake.

It is one of the most amazing stories of fraud that I have ever heard of.

In 2003 Elizabeth dropped out of Stanford University at the age of 19 to become in her mind the next Steve Jobs, turtle neck shirts included, but this time it wasn't iPods and iPhones. This time, the target was the 1.4 Trillion dollar pharmaceutical industry. She set her goal on an invention that was truly an invention of her mind, and apparently the invention never was able to leave her mind.

But never mind that it was never invented. That did not stop Elizabeth Holmes from making it up, literally. She created a machine called the "Edison" that would supposedly revolutionize the testing of blood. It was reported to be able to eliminate the vials and vials of blood that are normally taken when someone goes to the doctor for blood work. Not only that, It would be much more convenient and cost

dramatically less. It would eventually land in the Walgreens throughout the country and by only submitting a pin prick of blood on the tip of your finger, it would be able to do in 4 hrs what it took days and sometimes weeks to do in a lab.

It was incredible. Half the size of a dishwasher in a residential home, it could be set up anywhere and could help millions get a handle on their health condition on a regular basis as much as sitting in the chair in a grocery store and taking your blood pressure. There were reports that Elizabeth's blood testing machine and her lab work could detect pancreatic cancers 17 years before it ever physically showed signs....just by a needle prick of blood.

It sounded too good to be true. Well, it really was too good to be true. But Elizabeth, the great con artist she was, could dupe the richest and the most powerful to invest. Men like Rupert Murdoch invested 125 million, other rich investors jumped on board.

The company that Elizabeth built, then named Theranos, grew to a 9 billion dollar company. Trustees include men like

- Henry Kissinger (former United States Secretary of State);

- Jim Mattis (retired Marine Corps four-star general);
- George Shultz (former United States Secretary of State);
- Richard Kovacevich (former CEO of Wells Fargo);
- William Perry (former United States Secretary of Defense); and
- William Foege (former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

Well apparently Scottish author, Sir Walter Scott was right when he wrote,

“Oh what a tangled web we weave.....When first we practice to deceive”.

All the lies and deception finally caught up with Elizabeth. Suspicion grew over the accuracy of the blood test and eventually some blood samples were retested in a regular lab and found to be contradictory, or just flat out wrong.

Like what one of the lab attendants said who blew the whistle on the whole scheme. “You are not talking about having food delivered or getting a

repair done. You are talking about your health, and that raises it to a whole new level.

Well, in this case of this charade , we had a college drop out that took advantage of the rich,..... but sadly it was at the expense of the health of the poor.

But there are others who are far worse. They don't just commit monetary fraud, but they commit spiritual fraud too. They are the Rich Prosperity preachers who take from the poor to pad their pockets and enable themselves to live in the lap of luxury by lying, cheating and stealing from people at their most vulnerable moments in life. They are the modern day Tetzels of the Reformation who move about promising the kingdom of prosperity by selling their indulgences.

They are wicked men, evil men who take advantage of the poor.

Kenneth Copeland

Perhaps one of the most talked-about preachers because of his lavish spending habits is the Evangelical preacher Kenneth Copeland. This man's

success as a televangelist is unmatched, owning a 1500-acre campus ground for his *Kenneth Copeland Ministries*. Despite his \$760 million net worth, he was heavily criticized for owning three luxurious private jets, which, in his defense, he says is necessary to 'talk to God' because he didn't want to 'get in a tube with a bunch of demons'. One of the aircraft is a Gulfstream V jet the Texas-based pastor purchased from actor and comedian, Tyler Perry, for \$20 million.

T.D. Jakes has made guest appearances in movies with the world's richest celebrities, is an established author, movie producer, and the *Bishop of the Potter's House International* megachurch, which boasts a capacity of 30,000 members. Sources estimate the building of the church to be at \$45 million. The wealthy pastor also owns 14,000 square feet of land in Fort Worth, Texas, as well as a \$5.5 million mansion seated on 17.8 acres of land. The massive property also comes equipped with a 7-car garage, which he occupies with a Rolls Rolls Royce Phantom, a 1957 Ford Thunderbird convertible, and a 1960 Trans-Am, to name a few

Another financial giant in the world of prosperity preaching, Jesse Duplantis comfortably makes a list alongside the world's wealthiest men of faith. With a net worth of \$50 million, He also founded the *Jesse Duplantis Ministries*, which he founded in 1978 and made an impressive \$6.22 million in sales. The New Orleans preacher owns a \$3 million home on a 35,000 square foot plantation home. To compliment that, he also owns a \$54 million private jet that he bought using the money from his congregation.

Creflo Dollar, Jr.. By 2007, he was preaching to a congregation of 30,000 members with \$69 million in revenue through gross cash collections.. He owns two Rolls-Royces, a private jet, and three multi-million dollar homes.

Joyce Meyer is a charismatic Christian speaker and author who previously ranked as No. 17 on the list of “25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America” by TIME Magazine. She has a \$10 million jet, several homes that cost up to \$2 million each, and a \$107,000 silver Mercedes sedan. The ministry's \$20 million headquarters is outfitted with \$5.7 million worth of furniture (including a \$23,000 antique marble-topped commode).

She responds to her critics by saying that she doesn't have to apologize for being blessed.

Joel Osteen is a best-selling author and the senior pastor of Lakewood Church, the largest... (motivational mega complex) in America, based in Houston, TX. Lakewood's attendance has grown from 5,000 to 43,000. I. He lives with his family in a \$10.5 million home.

Lesson:

There are 2 major themes running thru the first 6 verses

- 1. The Temporary nature of wealth.**
- 2. The Temptation to take advantage of people to get your wealth.**

This is all a fruit of the Worldliness James condemned earlier.

James 4:2–4 (NKJV)

² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and

adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

For today, we will consider

2. The Temptation to take advantage of people to get your wealth.

As I told you last week, it seems that James is addressing the Rich of the culture that were taking advantage of the poor. Gain wealth at the expense of the poor. The lack of language of a call to repentance and brotherly language is remarkably missing from v.1-6, with the abrupt change in verse 7 to address the brethren's need for patient.

James begins by warning of the sure and impending of the sinfully rich. Not the rich, but the sinfully rich.

Riches are a gift of the Lord.
Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)

²² The blessing of the Lord makes *one* rich....
Genesis 12:2 (NKJV)

² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you

And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

Genesis 13:2 (NKJV)

² Abram *was* very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

Deuteronomy 8:10–18 (NKJV)

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

¹¹ “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, ¹² lest— *when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; ¹³ and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; ¹⁴ when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might

test you, to do you good in the end—¹⁷ then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

¹⁸ “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

1 Samuel 2:7 (NKJV)

⁷ The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and lifts up.

Job 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And he said:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked shall I return there.
The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Riches are a gift of the Lord.

But greed, covetousness, selfishness and self-centered accumulation of wealth is a tool of the devil and an expression of our wretchedness.

These rich men that James is addressing were the worst of the worst. They are the kind that make their

wealth on the backs of the poor driving them into the ground and taking advantage of the neediness.

These men are evil and self-centered in the worst of ways. They will gladly destroy you and your family if they can make another dollar.

Their sins are numerous, but James points out a few festering sores of this rich men.

1. The were hoarders—

James 5:3b (NKJV)

You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

They were piling it up. This is not a saving account. This not the extra can of beans you have in your pantry. This is not growing a garden and canning vegetables for the winter.

This is an intentional piling up of more and more to the point that what you have begins to go bad.

It is gaining more and more for the sake of gaining more and more.

There is no intent and not desire to share with the poor or needy.

There is no intent or desire to use it and a charitable way.

James 5:2–3 (NKJV)

² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you

Saving is a good practice, with an open heart to share.

Hoarding is an evil practice with no desire to let go of your possessions.

Did you know that today we have identified a

“Hoarding Disorder”

“Hoarding disorder is an ongoing difficulty throwing away or parting with possessions because you believe that you need to save them. You may experience distress at the thought of getting rid of the items. You gradually keep or gather a huge number of items, regardless of their actual value.

Hoarding often creates extremely cramped living conditions with only narrow pathways winding through stacks of clutter. Countertops, sinks, stoves, desks, stairways and all other surfaces are usually piled with stuff. You may not be able to use

some areas for their intended purpose. For example, you may not be able to cook in the kitchen. When there's no more room inside your home, the clutter may spread to the garage, vehicles, yard and other storage areas.”<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hoarding-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20356056>

The extremely reclusive Collyer brothers, Homer and Langley, are perhaps two of the most famous **hoarders** of all time, but it took their deaths in 1947 to really shoot them into the spotlight. Langley, the younger of the two brothers, looked after his eventually blind and paralyzed sibling, while roaming town at night to collect more items.

No Item Unworthy

Few items were missing from Langley's hoard. Among the tons of stuff to emerge from the packed brownstone were mountains of newspapers and stacks of books, broken children's toys, dressmakers' dummies, dirty photographs, car parts, suitcases, breadboxes, broken furniture, multiple chandeliers and more than a dozen pianos.

To protect the approximate 100 tons of stuff piled high in the brothers' Manhattan brownstone, Langley would set booby traps.

Langley was killed when he accidentally triggered one of these traps, but when the smell finally caused overwhelmed neighbors to call the police, it was Homer whose body was found first. He had starved to death much too recently to make such an odor, so the search for Langley was still on. It would be weeks before he was found -- after a citywide search -- just 10 feet from his deceased sibling, unearthed from the debris he had spent so many years diligently amassing.<https://health.howstuffworks.com/mental-health/mental-disorders/5-famous-hoarding-cases.htm>

You can be just as guilty of sin hoarding junk as much as wealth. There are always people who are in need and there is always someone that could use that extra set of whatever it is you have. Nothing wrong with having an extra set, and extra pair or any extra thing, but be conscious of those in need around you. Be willing to step up and step out in faith that God will take care of you if you end up needing that extra thing that you gave to a person in need.

So the first Sin of these Rich men was

1. HOARDING.

2. FRAUD

v3b You have heaped up treasure in the last days.
 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

The scene centers on an unjust economic situation between an employer and his employees. James does not condemn the employer-employee relationship itself. What he does condemn is the *exploitation* of the employees by the employer

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 264). BMH Books.

laborers—- **ἐργάτης** *ergátēs*; gen. *ergátou*, masc. noun from *ergázomai* (2038), to toil, work. Laborer, worker.

(1) A worker or laborer, primarily in farming (Matt. 20:1, 2, 8; Luke 10:2, 7; 1 Tim. 5:18; James 5:4 [cf. Matt. 9:37, 38]).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

in the New Testament, denotes agricultural employees, workmen dependent on their daily earning to meet their material need (Matt. 9:37; 20:1–10). They are further identified by an appositional construction, “who mowed your fields” (*tōn amesantōn tas chōras humōn*), “those who ingathered your fields” (Young). “Mowed,” a verbal form not used elsewhere in the New Testament, seems to have the primary meaning of “gathering in.” The reference is to the wheat and barley harvests that were cut and shocked by hand. The aorist tense denotes that the work has been completed and “the wages,” the stipulated pay for the labor, have been justly earned. “Fields” (*chōras*) here, as in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16), implies the extensive fields of these rich landlords. The scene is placed at the time of the harvest when

the ingathering of the new crop vastly increases the owners' wealth.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 264–265). BMH Books.

The joyous harvest scene greatly increases the landlord's callous cruelty because he has “failed to pay” the justly earned salary due the workmen

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 265). BMH Books.

4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which **you kept back** by fraud,

to be cheated out of v. — to be or become deprived of something by deceit.

ἀποστερέω fut. ἀποστερήσω LXX; 1 aor. ἀπεστέρησα; perf. pass. ptc.

ἀπεστερημένος (στερέω 'rob'; Aeschyl., Hdt., et al.; ins, pap, LXX; Ath., Just.)

① **to cause another to suffer loss by taking away through illicit means, *rob, steal, despoil, defraud***

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 121). University of Chicago Press.

Perf Pass Part. —an ongoing problem. It had started and was not being corrected.

This injustice toward day laborers was an evil of frequent occurrence from earliest times, one that the Mosaic law strictly prohibited

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 265). BMH Books.

Leviticus 19:13 (NKJV)

¹³ ‘You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.

Deuteronomy 24:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ “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.

Jeremiah 22:13 (NKJV)

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,

Malachi 3:5 (NKJV)

⁵ And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and
widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,”
Says the Lord of hosts.

1 Timothy 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the Scripture says, *“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,”* and, *“The laborer is worthy of his wages.”*

⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the _____

reapers have reached the ears of
the Lord of Sabaoth.

“Are crying out” (*krazei*), a present active verb, dramatically pictures “the wages” unjustly withheld as continually crying out for vengeance. It denotes a loud cry or scream, such as the cry of demons being expelled from their victims (Mark 9:26; Luke 9:39). But the verb also is used of inanimate things crying out in an appeal against injustice, such as the blood of Abel (Gen. 4:10) or the sin of Sodom (18:20; 19:13)

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 265). BMH Books.

and the cries of the
reapers have reached the ears of
the Lord of Sabaoth.

βοή, ἦς f: the sound of shouting or crying out—

‘cry, shout.’ αἱ βοαὶ τῶν τῶν εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου Σαβαὼθ εἰσεληλύθασιν ‘the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty’ Jas 5:4

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, pp. 397–398). United Bible Societies.

shout n. — a loud utterance; often in protest or opposition.

βοή, Dor. **βοά**, ἦ, *loud cry, shout* in Hom. mostly *battle-cry*

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). In [A Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 320). Clarendon Press.

In the Septuagint it is used of the cry to God by the oppressed and downtrodden The articular aorist participle “of the harvesters” (*tōn therisantōn*) pictures them as a specific group of workers who have completed the harvesting; but they cannot enter into the joy of the harvest because their hard labor remains unrewarded.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 265). BMH Books.

Exodus 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

Exodus 3:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And the Lord said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have

heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

Deuteronomy 26:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

The cries of the laborers do not get the attention of the rich landlords, but they do get the attention of the King of Kings.

and the cries of the
reapers have reached the ears of
the Lord of Sabaoth.

The perfect tense verb “have reached,” standing emphatically at the end of the sentence, assures that God had already taken notice and that His judgment is being prepared

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 265–266). BMH Books.

by “the Lord Almighty” (*kuriou sabaōth*, “the Lord of Sabaoth”). *Sabaoth*, which occurs elsewhere in the

New Testament only in Romans 9:29 as a quotation from Isaiah 1:9, casts “an Old Testament solemnity” over James’s words. It points to a Jewish author as well as to Jewish readers. It is one of the most majestic titles of the God of Israel, “expressing not only His majesty and power as creator and ruler of the world, but also as commander of the hosts of heaven.”³⁶

the Hebrew word for “hosts,” is used of human armies (Num. 1:3), angelic armies (1 Kings 22:19), and the stars of heaven (Deut. 17:3)

Doerksen, V. D. (1983). [James](#) (p. 118). Moody Press

The Septuagint transliterated the term or used such variants as “Lord of powers” or “Lord of Omnipotence.” This distinctive Hebrew name for God “combines majesty and transcendence.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 266). BMH Books.

The title, which occurs twenty-three times in the book of Malachi, stresses that the poor and the helpless have on their side the Lord of hosts, who can destroy the tyranny of the oppressors and punish their iniquities

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 266). BMH Books.

The evil oppressors of the laborers will not be held guiltless. They will be punished.

They may believe that they can take advantage of the poor laborers who provide bread for them. But they do not realize that these who have so little the rich are taking advantage of, have the King of armies on their side. And he is sharpening his glittering sword, tightening His bow and sharpening his arrows to pierce them and cut them asunder.

Proverbs 14:31 (NKJV)

31 He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,

But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. A frightening judgment awaits those who unjustly hoard the wealth they rob from the poor. Their victims will cry out for justice to the Righteous Judge and He will not disappoint them.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 247). Moody Press.

So the Sins of these Rich men was

1. HOARDING.

2. FRAUD

3. SELF-INDULGENCE

5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

James described their self-indulgence by using three verbs. *Truphaō* (**lived luxuriously**) appears only here in the New Testament.

τρυφάω *trupháō*; contracted *truphṓ*, fut. *truphésō*, from *truphé* (5172), luxury. To live luxuriously, in pleasure (James 5:5; Sept.: Is. 66:11).

Deriv.: *entrupháō* (1792), to revel luxuriously.

Syn.: *spataláō* (4684), to live in pleasure; *strēniáō* (4763), to live riotously or wantonly.

Ant.: *stenochoṛéomai* (4729), to be hemmed in, distressed; *egkrateúomai* (1467), to exercise self-restraint; *chrérō* (5535), to be in need; *epaitéō* (1871), to beg.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The related noun *truphē* has the basic meaning of “softness.” James condemned the wicked rich for living in soft, extravagant luxury at the expense of others. Far

from being first-century Robin Hoods, stealing to give to others, they stole to line their own pockets.

The phrase **led a life of wanton pleasure** derives from a single Greek verb, *spatalaō*, used only here and in 1 Timothy 5:6. It has the connotation of giving oneself to the pursuit of pleasure, or plunging headlong into dissipation. Those who pursue pleasure and luxury often descend into vice in a vain attempt to satisfy their insatiable desires. A life without self-denial soon goes out of control in every area. Paul described such people as dead even while they live (1 Tim. 5:6) because, like the foolish son in our Lord's parable, they squander everything on loose living (Luke 15:13). Those with money frequently close their eyes to the needs of others and the work of God, living solely to gratify their selfish, sinful desires. And, apart from faith in Christ, they face eternal ruin and loss.

Finally, James accused the wicked rich of having **fattened** their **hearts**. *Trephō* (**fattened**) means "to nourish, feed, or fatten." The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) used it in Jeremiah 46:21 to speak of fattened calves. The striking picture James paints is of oppressive, self-indulgent robbers, who have satiated themselves on the plunder taken from their victims. The desire for

luxury led to vice, which led the unjust hoarders to seek to selfishly indulge every desire of their **hearts**.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 247–248). Moody Press.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–12 (NKJV)

⁴ I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. ⁵ I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them. ⁶ I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. ⁷ I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds.

⁹ So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

¹⁰ Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure,
For my heart rejoiced in all my labor;
And this was my reward from all my labor.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all *was* vanity and grasping for the wind.
There was no profit under the sun.

5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

But lavish self-indulgence can lead to something worse than vanity. In keeping with the metaphor of the wicked rich having fattened their hearts, James warns of a coming **day of slaughter**—a frightening picture of judgment. In vivid language, he depicts the self-indulgent hoarders as fattened calves, headed for the slaughterhouse of divine judgment. And, apart from saving faith in Christ, that is the reality that awaits them.

The Bible often uses this imagery of slaughtering animals to depict the terrifying reality of God's judgment

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 248). Moody Press.

Isaiah 34:5–8 (NKJV)

- 5 “For My sword shall be bathed in heaven;
Indeed it shall come down on Edom,
And on the people of My curse, for judgment.
- 6 The sword of the Lord is filled with blood,
It is made overflowing with fatness,
With the blood of lambs and goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.
For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
- 7 The wild oxen shall come down with them,
And the young bulls with the mighty bulls;
Their land shall be soaked with blood,
And their dust saturated with fatness.”
- 8 For *it is* the day of the Lord’s vengeance,
The year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

Blind to heaven, deaf to warnings of hell, insensitive to the impending day of slaughter and judgment, the unrepentant, selfish, indulgent hoarders stumble blindly to their doom. Unless they repent, James warns, they will experience eternal damnation.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 249). Moody Press.

This is the final progression in the downward spiral followed by the rich people James rebuked. Having unjustly hoarded the money they robbed from their

poor day laborers and spent it on their self-indulgent desires, they went even further and **condemned and put to death the righteous man**. They would literally kill to maintain their opulent lifestyle. **Condemned** is from *katadikazō*, which means “to pass sentence upon,” or “to condemn.”

The Greek verb translated **put to death** (*phoneuō*) is translated “murder” in all of its other New Testament appearances (Matt. 5:21; 19:18; 23:31, 35; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 13:9; James 2:11; 4:2). The implication is that the wicked rich were using the courts to judicially murder some of the abused poor.

Moffatt notes that in Jewish usage it had a wider significance and could mean murdering a man by depriving him of his living.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 267). BMH Books.

Thus “these wicked people did not merely condemn the just; they proceeded to execute the decisions of the puppet courts

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 268). BMH Books.

God established courts to fairly, impartially dispense justice (Deut. 17:8–13). Judges were not to be greedy (Ex. 18:21–22), show partiality (Lev.

19:15), tolerate perjury (Deut. 19:16–20), or take bribes (Mic. 3:11; 7:3). But even in Israel there was terrible corruption. Amos denounced the perversion of justice taking place in the courts of his day: “For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, you who distress the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate” (Amos 5:12). “Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate!” Amos urged. Then “perhaps the Lord God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of Joseph” (v. 15). In James’s day, too, the wicked rich sought to pervert the justice system and use it against the poor (cf. James 2:6).

The term **righteous man** denotes someone morally upright (e.g., Gen. 6:9; 2 Sam. 4:11; Matt. 1:19; 10:41; Acts 10:22)—as was James himself, as his nickname “the just” attests. James made it clear that the victims of the rich oppressors were innocent of any crime or wrongdoing.

“Innocent men” (*tōn dikaion*, literally, “the righteous one”) is not to be restricted to a particular individual; the article is generic, viewing the individual as representative of his class. His very character as “righteous,” morally upright and just,

would arouse the hatred of the unjust rich against him.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 268). BMH Books.

It is best to understand the **he** who did **not resist** the rich as the innocent, abused poor man they hauled into court. That may indicate that the victims were defrauded believers, committing themselves, as did the Lord Jesus Christ, into the care of God when falsely accused (1 Pet. 2:23).

1 Peter 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

Romans 12:14–21 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give

place to wrath; for it is written, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his
head.”*

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

By not resisting their oppressors, they lived out the truths taught by our Lord in

Matthew 5:39–42:

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Wealth may be a blessing, a gift from God bringing the opportunity to do good. But that can only be true of those who are also “rich in faith” (James 2:5) and “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). If wealth is to be a source of blessing and not condemnation, it must

not be uselessly hoarded, unjustly gained, self-indulgently spent, or ruthlessly acquired.

Paul's charge to Timothy shows how God expects the wealthy to use their riches. It forms a fitting contrast to the abuse of wealth James condemned.

1 Timothy 6:17–19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 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

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 249–250). Moody Press.

Psalm 104:1–7 (NKJV)

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great:
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
- 2 Who cover *Yourself* with light as *with* a garment,
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.
- 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the
waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
- 4 Who makes His angels spirits,
His ministers a flame of fire.
- 5 *You who* laid the foundations of the earth,
So *that* it should not be moved forever,
- 6 You covered it with the deep as *with* a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.
- 7 At Your rebuke they fled;
At the voice of Your thunder they hastened
away.

2 Thessalonians 3:3–6 (NKJV)

³ But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

⁵ Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

