

May 4, 2014

## A Biblical Perspective on Wealth

### James 5:1-6

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

##### **James 5:1-6**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup> Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> 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! <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.

#### Prayer

##### INTRODUCTION:

Today's scripture starts with "Come now". This is the same words used to start last week's scripture in James 4:13. "Come now" means to **pay close attention, this is important!**

Most of us here today either are or have been considered middle class at some point in our life. When James wrote this, times were different than the way we live today in the United States. They were either very poor or very rich. There were very few people in between.

There were very few rich in that day, but we know that there were some who attended the services.

##### **James 2:1-3**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. <sup>2</sup> For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, <sup>3</sup> and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine

clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”

If we could go back in time and attend a service where James preached this message around 50 AD, we would be considered rich. The message would definitely be directed toward us.

So what is James trying to tell us here? Is he saying that being rich is wrong? How can we define what it means to be rich?

Rich could be defined as owning more than our daily needs. It does not only refer to money. It would also include our possessions such as food, clothes, necessities, shelter, and transportation. Most of us have ample supplies of these possessions.

I believe that it is clear that the scriptures do not condemn wealth. The Bible has many righteous examples of people who were rich. (Moses, Abraham, Job, Solomon, etc.)

### **1 Timothy 6:17-19**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

Paul’s letter to Timothy shows how wealth that is earned and used properly is a blessing and James shows how wealth that is gained fraudulently and coveted by greed is a sin. Paul tells us not to put our hope in the “uncertainty of riches” but on God. After all, it is God who is supplying our needs by giving us the health and ability to accomplish what we do. It can be taken away at anytime.

So wealth is not the issue. It is the means by which it is acquired and the attitude that we hold concerning our wealth that makes it good or bad. I would like to consider **four** attitudes, that we might have, that will cause our wealth to either be a sin or a blessing. James takes a “If the shoe fits, wear it” approach. In other words, examine yourself, if any of your attitudes toward wealth are wrong, you must seek forgiveness and make it right.

## **BODY:**

The first wrong attitude concerning wealth

### **I. Hoarding Wealth without Sharing.**

#### **James 5:1-3**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>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!

Many people are living as if the only thing that matters is that they succeed in life. They spend all of their attention on how to earn money and accumulate possessions with absolutely no consideration to God.

When we live life our way, we are only storing up treasures on earth. We cannot take our possessions with us when we die. Our whole life has been in vain.

If these decisions were made for your own self with a total indifference to God, then you will perish.

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

I am sure that you have experienced times when someone came to you and claimed they were in need. We know that we are to be generous and ready to share with people in need. Before we would give them money, we would no doubt try to determine what their need is and if what you gave them would be used to satisfy that need.

I would suggest that you reverse this role and consider how God might supply your needs that you ask of Him. When He gives to you, do you use it to take care of the needs that you have just asked Him to help with? Do you use His blessings for good? Or, do you waste them on selfish things? When God sees that you have been a good steward, He will give you more with more responsibility.

We may feel, when we are wealthy, that we can buy our way out of many things here on earth, but you cannot buy yourself out of eternal separation from God. Our earthly riches are only temporary. Verse 3 says the “rust” of our wealth will be a witness against us. It will burn our conscience throughout eternity on

what we could and should have done with our wealth while on earth. We should have used it for God!

The second wrong attitude concerning wealth

## **II. Being Dishonest in Order to Gain Wealth.**

### **James 5:4**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> 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.

“Sabaoth” means Armies or Hosts of Angels.

The accumulation of riches can become so important in your life that you do not care who has to be destroyed in order to accomplish your goals. If you can figure out a way not to pay someone for services rendered, that is fine. “The end justifies the means”.

You see this all of the time with scams, ponzi schemes, insider trading, etc. Many people have claimed bankruptcy in order to get out of having to pay for boats, cars, and myriad other things that they purchased for their own pleasure. If you have earned income in this manner, it will be nearly impossible to use it for good with a good conscience.

Have you gained by dishonesty? Have you cheated on taxes? Have you fudged on time that was not done? Or maybe you put in the time, but did not do the work that was expected. This is all fraudulently acquired riches.

James tells us we will receive our punishment.

The third wrong attitude concerning wealth

## **III. Misusing Wealth for Self Indulgence.**

### **James 5:5**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

Parable of the Rich Fool

### **Luke 12:16-21**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>16</sup> And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. <sup>17</sup> And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup> Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.”’ <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?’ <sup>21</sup> So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Sometimes we can get so wrapped up on our riches and how hard we had to work to get them, that we forget God and misuse them. We begin to think that since we had to work so hard to earn it, that we should live in luxury as a reward for our hard work.

Not all luxury and pleasure is wrong.

### **1 Timothy 6:17b-18**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

fix their hope ... on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.  
<sup>18</sup> *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

God wants us to enjoy the things He supplies you with. The important part is to give God the credit for the blessings instead of you and use them for others.

Our money is like a tool, we can play with the tool, or use it for its intended purpose.

### **1 Timothy 5:5-6**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. <sup>6</sup> But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

The “wanton pleasure” referred to here is the same sin that brought down Sodom and Gomorrah.

The fourth wrong attitude concerning wealth

## **IV. Persecuting the Righteous with Your Wealth.**

### **James 5:6**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>6</sup>You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.

Money and possessions are not evil—only the love of it. I Tim. 6: 10 says, The love of money is the root of all evil.

When we love money, we are willing to use our wealth to take advantage of the poor man who is unable to defend himself in a court of law.

### **Philippians 4:11-12**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>11</sup>Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. <sup>12</sup>I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Paul tells us that the goal for our life is contentment. We must be trusting God and learn to be content with what He supplies to us. When we do this, we will no longer condemn other men for our gain.

### **CONCLUSION:**

### **Matthew 16:26**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>26</sup>For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

There is a bumper sticker that says: He that ends with the most toys, WINS!  
How wrong that is!

God gave us the ability to get ALL that we have. He can take that ability and our health away at anytime. He can cause us to face a calamity in life that would take all of our wealth in one fell swoop.

Do not put your hope in your riches. Put your hope in God who supplies all of our needs. Learn to be content with God's blessings.

### **Matthew 6:19-21**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Are you giving to God what is His?

What God has supplied for us, we should give a portion back to Him. I have learned that I am able to do more with what is left after giving to God, then I would have done with all of it.

## 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>6</sup> Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

James is telling us that **our life is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away**. Consider that our life on earth is very short compared to an **eternity** with God. We should be thanking God for our supplied needs and use our wealth to further His kingdom.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, the window of opportunity is open for you now. God wants to come into your life. Won't you come forward this morning and let God know that you are ready to turn your life around for Him and start living your life for Him?

Your destiny is determined by how you live. Will it be for yourself or by giving to God?

If you have wandered away from the Lord and the Holy Spirit is convicting you this morning to come back home, this invitation is open to you to rededicate your life to Christ by stepping forward.

We are also here with open arms, if you would like to identify yourself as part of this family of God in the Greenwood Christian church.

## The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.  
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!  
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,  
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.