

"True Faith and the Wealth of this World"**James 5:1-6****Part 3**

Introduction: In the verses that are before us this morning we have already looked at several thoughts over the past several weeks. Here in these 6 verses James is addressing a group of people who are mixed in with the believers but they are not saved.

Notice James 5:1

We see here that the people James is addressing are within the believers and we know this because he does not tell the believers to go tell the rich about the judgment that is coming on them but he addresses the rich directly with his letter. That tells us they were people who would hear the reading of the letter.

I told you last week these were people who were controlled by the wealth of this world. They desired to have eternal life and this we know because they were mixed in with the believers but they refused to come to God on His terms. They were religious but not saved. That, by the way, is the definition of a religious person; they desire to have what God offers but they refuse to come to God on His terms.

James is addressing people who are consumed by the wealth of this world. They love the world and they live to gather as much as they possibly can. But the sad thing is they are headed for the Judgment of God. James calls on them to weep and to howl for the miseries that SHALL come upon them.

This past week I was reading in the Old Testament and I read Psalm 49 and I realized it connected with these very verses in James. Let me show you.

Here is the opening for the Psalm:

Psalm 49:1-3

Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

² *Both low and high, rich and poor, together.*

³ *My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*

The Psalm is addressed to all the inhabitants of the world.

Psalm 49:6-12

⁶ *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;*

⁷ *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:*

⁸ *(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)*

⁹ *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.*

¹⁰ *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.*

¹¹ *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.*

¹² *Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.*

Psalm 49:14, 16-20

¹⁴ *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.*

¹⁶ *Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;*

¹⁷ *For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.*

¹⁸ *Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.*

¹⁹ *He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.*

²⁰ *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.*

The writer of Psalm 49 speaks of many things. But there are 2 that stand out to me in the light of what we are looking at in James 5 and that is;

1. Riches are deceitful.

2. Those who live for the wealth of this world will one day be so sorry for the exchange they have made. They traded eternal life for things that will one day perish.

Now let us get back to James 5. We have really looked at 2 points here so far.

I. The Pronouncement of Judgment.

This is in James 5:1

II. Their sins exposed.

1. The sin of hoarding wealth.

Notice James 5:2-3

Now in these verses James reminded these people that the 3 things which they were hoarding (grain, garments, and gold) would all perish and were at the time perishing.

The word "corrupted" in verse 2 means "rotted". This was speaking of the grain they had hoarded. Their garments were moth eaten. Their gold and silver was "cankered" which means "rusted". The idea here is that there was corrosive metal mixed in the coins and over time while in storage they would rust. We must understand that the people often stored their money in the ground or in the walls of their houses. Let me show you a verse that will help us to see this.

Matthew 6:19

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

The words "**break through**" actually mean "**to dig through a house**".

Now there are 2 more thoughts I need to share with you from James 5:2-3 about the hoarding of wealth or the hoarding of the STUFF of this world.

Notice James 5:3 again.

James uses the word "rust" here and there are really 2 meanings for this word. It can mean "rust" or it can mean "poison". Now I believe the word refers to the decay of all 3 of the investments of the rich people whom James is writing to and I will show you that in a moment.

But it is also interesting to me that the word can refer to poison. It is a reminder that when people get caught up and consumed with the wealth of this world that it can become a "poison". Poison makes a person sick and it hinders their ability to function and make good choices. That is exactly what happens to people who are consumed with the wealth of this world. Their lives are completely altered by their desire to grasp more wealth. Here in James these people had made the decision to trade eternal life for worldly wealth. They had been "poisoned" by the wealth of this world.

But there is something else here that I want you to see.

Notice James 5:3 again.

James tells them that the "rust" or we could say the decay of what they had hoarded (grain, garments, and gold) were a witness against them.

This past week God brought to my attention what James meant here.

I want you to think with me about a "witness" for a moment. There are 2 ways to view a "witness". It can refer to someone who watches what happens (and this is the way it is almost always thought of) or it can be someone who testifies in a court room. In Hebrews we see the word again.

Hebrews 12:1a

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,

This is a reference to all of those in Hebrews 11 who were the giants of the faith. They are not watching down on us they have testified as witnesses with their lives.

In the context of James the setting is a court room. Remember that he is talking about the judgment that SHALL come upon them. So the meaning is the rust is personified as someone who will testify in court.

So what will be the testimony of the rust? This is very sobering and very sharp and piercing. Now remember they were not TRUE believers but they were religious so they thought they were "Christians".

The "rust" or "decay" of all these people hoarded will testify that they never cared about the person who had no food. It will testify that they never cared about the person who was cold and did not have the proper clothing. It will testify that they did not care about

the person who did not have enough money to pay his or her bills. If they would have truly cared they would have not hoarded the grain, the garments, and the gold. If they truly cared they would have used them to help those who were less fortunate.

But let me go deeper with this thought if I can. The decay of what they hoarded will not only testify that they did not care but it will also testify that they did not have within them the Spirit of God. This is true because God has deep concern for the poor.

Application:

I want to speak to those who are believers for a moment. The words of James should make us think and examine our lives. Greed and hoarding are a sign that a person is not a believer.

But I am also aware that we as believers can also get caught up in the "STUFF" of this world. But when we are controlled by the Spirit of God we will have a deep concern for the poor and we will desire to help them with whatever resources we have.

Now many people are reluctant to invest in the poor because they are fearful of what tomorrow may hold. Let me show you some verses about giving.

Proverbs 11:24-26

²⁴ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

²⁵ The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

²⁶ He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

Proverbs 19:17

¹⁷ He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Proverbs 28:27

²⁷ He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

² *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

³ *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*

⁴ *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*

⁵ *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

⁶ *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

⁷ *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:*

⁸ *But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.*

⁹ *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

¹⁰ *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.*

Deuteronomy 15:7-14

⁷ *If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:*

⁸ *But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.*

⁹ *Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.*

¹⁰ *Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.*

¹¹ *For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*

¹² *And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.*

¹³ *And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:*

¹⁴ *Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.*

Conclusion:

Notice James 5:3

These people hoarded knowing it was the last days. We are about 2000 years deeper into the last days than they were. Which means time is running out to invest in eternity. Let me leave you with a question;

"What does your lifestyle testify about you and your heart?"