

"True Faith and the Wealth of this World"**James 5:1-6****Part 4**

Introduction: In the past 3 messages we have been looking at James 5:1-6 and in that study we have only made our way through 3 verses. Within these verses James is addressing a group of people who are controlled by the wealth of the world. They are people who desire to have what God offers but they are not willing to come on God's terms.

Now I had told you before that having wealth is not a sin. But wealth can present several problems in your life:

- A. You are accountable for the wealth you have.
- B. It can control you and all you do.
- C. It can be a great distraction.
- D. It can give you a false sense of security.

Let me show you something that came into my mind this past week.

Luke 12:13-21

¹³ *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.

I. The Pronouncement of Judgment.

Notice James 5:1

James opened this section with a warning of the coming judgment upon these people. This verse was to help them to see the danger of the position they were standing in.

He then went on to expose the sins of these people.

II. Their sins exposed.

1. The sin of hoarding wealth.

Notice James 5:2-3

These people had invested all of their riches in 3 things:

1. Grain
2. Garments
3. Gold

James explained that all 3 of these would eventually deteriorate and the "rust" of them would be a witness against them. James personifies the "rust" or the decay of each of these when he states that it will be a witness against them.

Now last week I explained to you that a "witness" can be someone who sees something happen or it can be someone who gives a testimony in court. The "rust" here is presented as someone giving a testimony in court. If these people were to die without Jesus Christ and they continued to worship the wealth of this world then the "decay" of what they had hoarded would testify 3 things against them.

1. The money they hoarded would testify they never cared about the people who did not have enough to pay their bills.
2. The grain would testify they did not care about the people who did not have enough to eat.
3. The garments would testify they did not care about those who did not have the proper clothing.

The next sin which James points to is:

2. The sin of withholding wages.

Notice James 5:4

The first word of this verse is here to get the attention of those who were controlled by the wealth of this world.

The labors here would have people they hired to either plant seeds or to harvest crops. Those who owned farms would not have been able to pay servants all year so they would hire them at certain times of the year. They would be hired to plant the fields and to harvest the crops. These were what we would call "part time" employees. These would have been the poor people of that day and they just went from one job to another and they did whatever they could to provide for their families.

Now what we need to know is something that these Jewish readers would have known and that was that God gave specific commands as to how these temporary labors were to be treated.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

¹⁴ Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

¹⁵ At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

Let me show you another passage to help you to see how God had made provisions for the poor.

Leviticus 19:9-13

⁹ And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

¹⁰ And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

¹¹ Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

¹² *And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.*

¹³ *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*

Now let me bring you back again to James.

Notice James 5:4 again.

Here we see that the rich (who knew what God had said about paying the temporary labors) were keep back by fraud the wages which they owned to these people. Now the idea here is not that they were not paying them but it was that they were not paying them on time. They were making them wait for their wages.

The verse tells us the money was kept back by "fraud" which means "it was kept back in a deceptive way". Let me explain what was happening. These temporary labors were being hired to work in the fields of the rich and then at the end of the day the rich would claim to not have the money to pay them what they earned. The TRUTH was they **did** have the money but they loved it so much they did not want to part with it.

In this verse James tells them there are 2 things that were happening because of their treatment of the poor labors;

1. **The wages were crying out to God.**
2. **The worker's cries were reaching the ears of the Lord.**

As I said before, it is not a sin to have wealth but it is a sin to attempt to gain wealth in a deceptive and oppressive way.

Application:

Let me just say that if you own anyone money and you are avoiding that person because you do not want to pay them what you owe them you need to understand 2 things here:

- a. **The money you owe them cries out to God.**
- b. **Their cries which they offer because of how you have defrauded them are heard by God.**

Let me show you something which Jeremiah wrote.

Jeremiah 22:13-17

¹³ Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

¹⁴ That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.

¹⁵ Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

¹⁷ But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

Here God confronts those who desired to build their houses by unrighteous means. They refused to pay those who worked for them the wages that were owed. God then points to their fathers who took care of the poor and the needy and He says "IT WAS WELL WITH THEM".

Now I want you to catch this, It was well with those who treated the poor and the needy with justice, so the opposite will be true for those who withhold payment or wages from whom it is do."

Illustration:

Years ago I knew of a man who defrauded the people who worked for him. He would claim to be losing money and he would agree to pay one amount and when his workers were finished with the project he would withhold what he really owed and he would claim to have lost money. But his lifestyle proved the opposite was true. This very day he is suffering and all the money in the world cannot fix his health. I cannot say it is because of how he treated his hired help but as I have studied this it really makes me wonder.

Let's get back to James again.

Notice James 5:4 again.

James tells his readers that the cries of the wages and the workers have entered into the ears of the Lord of the Sabaoth. This is a very significant title for our Lord. Let me show you how Vines defines this:

"Lord of the armies of Israel, as those who are under the leadership and protection of Jehovah maintain his cause in war..."

Now let me show you the meaning of the root word and then I will pull this altogether.

"that which goes forth, army, war, warfare, host..."

Now this may cause you to wonder what does all of this have to do with the rich not paying the wages to the temporary labors?

The idea which James presents here to those who are rich is that God has a heavenly army who fights for Him and there is no way that you will do what you are doing and get away with it.

The title "Lord of the Sabaoth" would be the same as the Old Testament title "Lord of Hosts". This name was often used when the people of God were defenseless and wanted protection, and when their enemies were numerous and powerful.

Let me show you what God said about the oppression Israel received from the Babylonians.

Jeremiah 50:31-34

³¹ *Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee.*

³² *And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.*

³³ *Thus saith the LORD of hosts: The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.*

³⁴ *Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.*

Conclusion:

Let me pull this altogether and give you something to carry home. We are commanded by the Bible to pay our debts.

Romans 13:7-8

⁷Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

⁸Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Proverbs 3:27-28

²⁷ Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

²⁸ Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

If you owe something to someone then make it right because if you don't you will be face the Lord of the Sabaoth or the Lord of Hosts. Remember the money you owe cries out to God and He hears the cries.