

I. Weep and Wail for Your Future If You Are a Rich Abuser

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you.

See Psalm 49—An Open Letter to the World on Wealth and Eternity.

Wealth can not only be abused; it can also turn on you.

II. Know the Nature of Money: Wealth Corrodes and Corrosion Testifies

²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. [*See Matt 6:19-21—"Do not store up. . . ."*]

Your wealth went bad. Why?

III. Do Not Do This With Your Money: Seven Habits of Highly Exploitative People

Habit 1—Hoarding—**You have hoarded wealth in the last days.** [*See Luke 12:13-21—Parable of the Rich Fool.*]

Habit 2—Cheating workers—**⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.**

Habit 3—Living in luxury—**⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and** [*See Luke 16:19-31—Rich Man and Lazarus.*]

Habit 4—Self-indulging—**self-indulgence.** [*See Matt 19:16-30—Rich Young Ruler.*]

Habit 5—Nourishing one's own heart in a deadly day—**You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.**

Habit 6—Condemning—**⁶You have condemned**

Habit 7—Murdering the innocent—**and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.**

Shifting content, audience, and tone, James now moves from addressing "you rich people" (5:1) to addressing "brothers (and sisters)."

IV. Learn From Farmers, Prophets, and Job About Patience and Perseverance

⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! [*See 1 Thes 4:13-18.*]

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

In another shift, James turns our attention from patient farmers to the topic of swearing.

V. Do Not Swear—It's More Serious Than You Thought

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned. [*See Matt 5:34-37.*]

The Gospel: Zacchaeus was a rich, cheating, despised IRS agent. "But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'

⁹Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:8-10, NIV).

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Luke 16:13—the context is the Parable of the Shrewd Manager. This verse is also found in Matt 6:24, in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where the context is the storing up treasures in heaven, not on earth.)

The Big Question: Will you diligently study, seek, and live God's will regarding wealth, perseverance, and swearing?

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