## The Perverted Power of Wealth & The Power of Patience

1. How do you normally respond to social injustice?

The Christians of the first century were mostly poor; however, in the synagogues they attended there were rich Jews who oppressed them. A great gulf existed between the rich and the poor in that society. The "middle class" as we know it today was not a major presence. James could see among some of his readers an excessive interest in the preoccupation with wealth which led to abuse and wicked behavior. He could have just turned his head—but he cared too much for them and for the ones being oppressed. So he sounded a warning!

**Prepare Your Heart**: Mighty Lord, enable us to listen and to hear everything You want to say to us. May we see the truths of this passage through Your holy eyes.

As persecution of the early church developed many believers lost their livelihood and were further exploited by the rich and powerful. James 5:1-11 speaks God's Word into this disturbing and distressing situation. **Read** and observe this section as a whole.

- 2. What do you find most striking about this passage?
- 3. What attention-grabbing phrase does James use to open this section (5:1a)? Compare with 4:13.
- 4. How would you characterize the spiritual condition of the "rich people" in James 5:1? Are they:
  - Non-believing Jews?
  - Complacent Jewish believers?
  - Jews who claim to have faith but their faith is proven false by the way they handle wealth? Clues can be found in the immediate context, the broader context of the book and in the overall theme of James' epistle. Write your answer below and tell how you support it.

In his 5.	is opening warning James thunders his condemnation in tones of the Old Testament prophets. What does James summon "the rich offenders" to do <u>first</u> and <u>why</u> (5:1)? Study each word and phrase carefully. Paraphrase 5:1 using the insights you have uncovered.			
6.	Wha	t are some of the ways in which wealth was valued during the first century (5:2-3)?		
Read us! 7.	I Jame a.	es 5:2-3 again, paying special attention to the graphic word pictures James draws for What is the first misery that is said to befall those who put their security in the things of this world (5:2-3a)?		
	b.	How are these images relevant to your life today, in the twenty-first century? Be specific.		
James 5:3 declares that a second misery awaits those who misuse wealth and store up treasures on earth. 1.) Reread 5:3 from several translations. 2.) Look up the word "hoarded" (NIV), in a dictionary. (Note: The New Testament regards the whole period between Christ's first and second comings as the "last days." See Hebrews 1:1-2 and 1 John 2:18.)  8. What certainties are described for those who hoard and misuse wealth (James 5:3)? What reality is James depicting for all his readers? (See also Luke 16:19-25.)				
9.		n James 5:4-6 list in your own words the sins and crimes that were committed by the thy of James' day.		

There are two ways to look at James 5:1-6—two perspectives that are important to notice. Jais speaking directly to the wealthy, but obviously not assuming everyone in his readership is this place. There are those who are cheated by the wealthy as well.  10. a. What can we observe about the poor "righteous man" in this section?			
	b.	In what ways does the "righteous man" in this passage describe or exemplify the only truly righteous One—the Lord Jesus Christ?	
The j	udgm th is r ng mo Wha	ght and Discussion nent that James proclaims in this passage can serve as a warning to all of us. While not sinful in itself, our natural sinful desires often come to fruition at the prospect of ore of it. t do you learn about the proper view and use of money from the following Scriptures? mothy 6:6-10, 17-19; Proverbs 30:8b-9; Matthew 6:19-21, 19:24; Luke 12:16-21, 16:13	
12.	Wha	t needs to change in your view of money and wealth and how to handle it?	
13.		t are some ways that we can monitor ourselves to see if we are falling into the "love of ey" trap?	

In view of James' stern proclamations to the rich in 5:1-6, he turns now and addresses the "brethren" who were suffering at their hands. **Reread** James 5:7-11. Notice the dramatic change in tone.

14. Look for and mark the key words and phrases in this section. List your findings.

15. How is the backdrop of the Lord's coming significant to both the rich and to those who were suffering unjustly?

James comes full circle as he begins the final summations of his letter—returning to the same theme he wrote about in the opening verses. (**Compare** James 1:2-4 with James 5:7-11.) How can Christians experience this kind of patient endurance as we wait for the Lord to return? To answer that question James provides three encouraging examples of the *power of godly patience*.

16. In what ways can you learn patience from the farmer, the prophets (Jeremiah 20:1-18), and Job (Job 1:1-2:11)?

- 17. Remaining patient under trials is a powerful testimony of sincere faith! Yet patience is not a quality we naturally possess. How are we able to endure patiently (Galatians 5:22-23)?
- 18. In all of life's experiences what does God want us to learn about Him (James 5:11c)?

James accurately and emotionally reflects the righteous heart of the Lord of Hosts, just as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and those prophetic peers once did. He understands that we all face trials. That we will rub shoulders with people whose hearts are set on evil and those who would condemn us for our faith. But be patient! Endure to the end! Keep loving people with the supernatural love that only Jesus can produce in us—for the crown of life awaits those who keep the faith to the end. And the Judge is coming to bring justice and to make all things right!

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