Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Judgment on the Wicked Rich, Part 2
Scripture: James 5:4-6
Code: 59-30

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I want us again to open our Bible tonight to the fifth chapter of the epistle of James. And we will examine this wonderful opening section, rich though frightening, full of awe and wonder as we see the Spirit of God speak directly the words of judgment on the wicked wealthy. Perhaps I ought to say as an opening remark that we have carried along the emphasis many times in speaking about God's judgment on wicked wealthy people that it is not wealth that is sinful, it is the misuse and abuse of it and that, of course, is the case in this text.

As we learned last time this is yet another of James' tests for living, saving faith. It is another test to validate or invalidate a person's claim to be a Christian. It is one thing to claim to be a Christian, it is another thing to verify the claim with your life. And I suppose that all of us, to one degree or another, would disclaim Christ in the life of someone in whom we saw no reason to believe they were a Christian. And that's really what James is after. He is simply saying that the visible test, the sort of litmus test of life as to whether or not you're a Christian has to do with the way you live. And that's just about as obvious and basic as it can be expressed. Every one of us puts our claim to faith in Christ on the line every day by the way we live, the way we talk, the way we conduct ourselves. And so you could look at a person's life in a myriad of different perspectives and see the validity or the invalidation of their claim to know Christ, and money is one of those very very key tests. How a person is related to money does tell us what we need to know about their relation to God.

Jesus said, "If you lay up treasure on earth," in other words, if your concern is to amass your fortune here, then your heart is here. If on the other hand you lay up treasure in heaven, your heart is there. Your heart is either earthbound or heavenbound, so says our Lord in Matthew 6:19 to 21. And then again in Luke chapter 16 verses 11 to 14 He said, in effect, summing it all up, that those people who serve money do not serve God and those people who serve God do not serve money. The two are mutually exclusive. And if you live for money, you do not live for God. And James says it back in chapter 4 verse 4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." If you are concerned with the things of this world, you demonstrate that you are a friend of the world and an enemy of God. Again they are mutually exclusive.

And then we reminded you last time of 1 John 2 in which John writes and says, "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So we can tell a lot about a person by what we see in terms of their use of and abuse of money.

Now obviously in the congregation to which James wrote, scattered Jews congregating together in the name of Christ in some locale unknown to us, there were people who were claiming to know Christ but whose lives were an invalidation of the claim. And in part, some of them were obviously lovers of money rather than lovers of God. They were the weedy soil we saw of Matthew 13 and though there was an initial response to the gospel, the deceitfulness of riches choked out that life before it could ever bear fruit. And such are those professing Christians that James wants to call to self-examination in this passage.

I mentioned to you also last Lord's day because I cannot restrain myself from mentioning it, due to the fact that it's in the papers every day and on the media, that we're not surprised by the current PTL scandal. I'm not because the worship of money is especially characteristic of people who are false teachers. It is characteristic of false teachers that they are engaged in things that bring them money and in things that are scandalous and immoral kinds of conduct.

To bring that a little more clear in your focus, look with me for a moment at 2 Peter. And I'm enlarging from the text of James, admittedly. James is primarily interested in those who were in the congregation who were loving money and therefore claimed illegitimately to be Christians. I'm broadening it to say that those who are specially guilty of claiming to be Christians but loving money are false teachers, who are in it for the money and use the name of Jesus to make merchandise of people. Notice in 2 Peter chapter 2 he starts out by talking about false prophets and false teachers who secretly, always secretly, they never announce who they are, they are always wolves in sheep's clothing, as Matthew 7:15 says, and a wolf in sheep's clothing is simply a wolf dressed up in a garment of wool. And the garment of wool was the cloak of a prophet so you have a wolf dressed like a prophet...false teachers, false prophets. And they bring in destructive or damnable heresies that include denying the Lord that bought them and they bring on themselves swift destruction. And many people follow their pernicious or evil ways.

Then verse 3, and the motive is through covetousness they covet. They want things and money and power with feigned words, that is with words of hypocrisy, they make merchandise of you. They really turn you into a commodity for their own gain.

Down in verse 10 further he talks about these kinds of people being presumptuous, self-willed and you follow the text into verse 12, they are natural brute beasts that ought to be taken and destroyed. They speak evil of the things they don't understand and they will utterly perish in their own corruption. They will receive the reward of unrighteousness as they that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, that is they engage in wildness and wickedness in the daytime. They are flesh spots and filth scabs

revelling with their own deceivings while they feast with you. Their eyes are full of adultery. They can't cease from sin. They beguile unstable souls. They have a heart they have exercised with covetous practices. And then he says, "They like Balaam," in verse 15, "love the wages of unrighteousness." Verse 18, they speak great swelling words of vanity. They are proud and egotistical and they are the heroes of all their own stories. They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantoness those that are just escaping from them who live in error. They are especially good at capturing people who are just coming out of some error but haven't yet grasped the truth. Verse 19, they promise liberty but they are the servants of corruption.

Now in those verses we find some factors that are repeated. One, they tend to be immoral, corrupt, evil. Two, they tend to be hypocritical, that is they use words that speak of God and Christ but they're words of hypocrisy. And most particularly for our thought tonight they do it for money. They make merchandise out of people. They function on the level of those who are covetous.

And then I'd like to call your attention to Jude's epistle-- a couple of books to the right. And in the little epistle of Jude which is just one chapter, and by the way in this month's issue of The Word of Grace Newsletter which we send out to all those who listen to the program, and you ought to be on that mailing list, it's a wonderful newsletter, but in that there's a little insert that I took from that magazine as I was looking at it the other day and it notes the mark of a charlatan as found in the epistle of Jude. First of all, they teach license instead of grace, verse 4. They creep in unawares. They are ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. In other words, they use grace to excuse their misconduct...turning grace into license. They want to talk about God's forgiveness and God's restoration and love and they're liable to sin one week and pop up as the guest evangelist the next week.

In verses 7 to 8 it tells us they engage in fornication and sodomy. Like Sodom and Gomorrah they give themselves over to fornication. They go after strange flesh, the gross sin of homosexuality. They defile the flesh, it says in verse 8. They also defy authority. They speak evil of dignities. That is they have no regard for those who are the angels of God. They assert themselves to be supreme and there is no higher court than they. They speak evil of things they don't understand, verse 10. They discredit things that are true and they give credit to things that are not. Verse 11, "Woe to them, they have gone the way of Cain and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," that again brings up the idea of their covetous greed. Verse 12, they always identify with true believers. They come to your love feasts. They feast with you. But they don't belong with you. They're spots, filth scabs, clouds without water, trees without fruit withered up, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. They inevitably boast about themselves, verse 16, they walk after their own lust and their mouth speaks great swelling words having men's persons in admiration for their advantage. They flatter to gain an advantage and they are overwhelmed with sensual lusts. Verse 19 says, "They are sensual, they do not have the Spirit."

It's a package, folks. When you see false teachers, you look at all the accoutrements that come with it. And it's not that difficult to discern what you're looking at. So, James announces God's judgment on people who are the wicked wealthy, whether they are just people in the church naming Christ or those false teachers of whom Peter and Jude have written so clearly.

Let's go back to James and look at chapter 5 and refresh ourselves for a moment and then complete this passage. In verse 2 James says, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries, or your wretchedness, that shall come upon you." He directs his attention to the rich. He says to them, "Now listen to me and the right response because of the misery that's going to come upon you in the judgment of God is that you should weep and howl." Those two words call for a violent almost uncontrollable grief in the light of inescapable divine judgment. "Weep and howl," as I pointed out last time, is very much an Old Testament kind of approach. It speaks about the idea of having verbal outward remorse at the impending doom that is coming from the judging hand of God. Isaiah calls upon people, for example, that are going to be judged in chapter 15 and verse 3, the people of Moab, and he says in their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, on the tops of their houses and in their streets everyone shall wail, weeping abundantly. And Heshbon shall cry out and Elealeh, and their voice shall be heard, and so forth and so on. Very much does James approximate the Old Testament prophet in calling for mourning.

In chapter 16 of Isaiah, verse 7, "Therefore shall Moab wail for Moab, everyone shall wail. And the foundations of Kir-haresh shall you mourn because they are stricken." Even in chapter...I believe it's chapter 23 verse 1, yes, "The burden against Tyre, howl, you ships of Tarshish, for it is laid waste so that there's no house, no entering in." And there are many other Old Testament passages, Jeremiah 48:20; another one that comes to mind in Ezekiel 21:12 where people are called to mourn and howl. Even that marvelous chapter 8 of Amos does the very same thing.

So he starts out by saying you better mourn, you better howl, you better weep, you better violently be agitated because of the impending judgment of God. And then he gives them the reasons for the judgment. The inexorable and escapable judgment of God is coming for four reasons, because their wealth was, one, uselessly hoarded; two, unjustly robbed; three, self-indulgently spent; and four, ruthlessly acquired. And these are the serious and damning sins of the wicked wealthy.

Now first remember verses 2 and 3 speak of hoarding. Your riches...and remember that word ploutos is connected to the name of one of the Greek gods, a name which meant "that which is yielded from the abundance of the earth." And it's my conviction that James primarily has in mind here the riches that are stored in food stuffs, like the wealthy man in Luke who stored his grain in his barns and said, "I'll take my ease; eat, drink and be merry. Live out my life never moving my fingers again, I have amassed enough grain to sustain me for food and to sell for everything else I need." In those days basically wealth was stored in three commodities: food, clothing and money. And so first James

attacks the idea of food, your food is corrupted, your riches, your ploutos are decayed. Rather than using their wealth to care for their family and to give to the Lord's work and to take the gospel to the lost and to care for the poor and the needy and the widow and the orphan, rather than using their money to support those in ministry, they hoarded it uselessly. They amassed it to themselves for their own future indulgence and their food was decayed and their garments became moth-eaten and their gold and silver which then was mixed with alloy and was subject to corrosion had indeed rusted.

And so he warns them that everything they have put their trust in is useless. The grain is decayed. The clothes are moth-eaten. And the coins are rusted. What do you have now? The rust comes to life and is personified in verse 3, "And the rust becomes a witness against them." Their rusted money shows their hoarding spirit. Their rusted money shows how indifferent they were to the poor. Their rusted money shows how uncaring they were to the needy. Their rusted money shows that they cared not to spread the gospel, they cared not to invest in the ongoing of the Kingdom. And their rusted money stands up to be the witness against them and then he goes a step further, "And the rust becomes that which eats your flesh as it were fire." The rust personified is not only the witness against them but their executioner...their executioner. And why? The end of verse 3, "You have hoarded together for the last days."

In other words, you have amassed and hoarded your wealth literally in these last days. How could you do that? Realizing that we live in the last days, realizing that we live in the end of the age when the Messiah has come and we are waiting for His imminent Second Coming, realizing that we are called to the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom, realizing that we are to do what God has called us to do, that is to use our money to support our family, to use it for the poor and the needy, for the ministry, for the winning of the lost, you have hoarded it for yourself and your money is a witness against you and your rusted money will be your executioner. And not in a slow way like money corrodes, but in a fast way, he says, it will eat your flesh as if it were fire. Rust is slow, fire is fast. You have done it in these last days.

In other words, you lived without regard for redemptive history, you lived without taking notice of God's clock, you lived as if all things would continue as they were. You lived as if Jesus had never come and would never come again. You lived with no thought of using money to purchase for yourselves eternal friends, as Luke 16 so beautifully puts it. You wasted your life totally. You wasted your treasure. You treasured up, in the words of Romans 2:5, wrath against the day of wrath. You just piled up judgment and the more rusted coins you had and the more moth-eaten clothes you had and the more decaying food you had, the louder the testimony against you in the day of judgment. Hoarding wealth is a serious sin. Hell, frankly, is for hoarders.

Look at Matthew 25 for a moment and there is there, I think, a vivid illustration of this. Matthew 25 verse 24, "Then he that had received one talent came," and you remember what he did with the one talent? What did he do with it? Buried it in the ground, didn't use it. And he says in verse 25, "I was

afraid and hid the talent in the earth, did nothing with what you gave me, got no return on it at all, no spiritual return," for this parable is to illustrate spiritual investment, not financial investment. "I did nothing with it. I did not use it to advance the Kingdom. I did not use it to exalt Your name. I buried it. It was wasted. The Lord said, You wicked slothful servant. You know I reaped where I sowed, not gather where I have not spread. You ought therefore to have put My money to the exchangers then at My coming I should have received Mine own with interest." That's not talking about having a good bank account. That's not putting your money in a good T-Bill so you that you get a good return. The physical illustration of investing with the bank is an illustration of using what God gives you to advance His Kingdom, to pay spiritual dividends. And so he says, "Take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has ten, for unto everyone that has shall be given and the one who has will have more abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." And then verse 30, "Cast that unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, send him to hell, he hoarded his treasure." And so I say again, hell is for hoarders, for people who though they may name the name of Christ show by the way they amass money for their ownself and their own pleasure that they have no thought for God or for heaven or for His Kingdom.

"My little children," says John in 1 John 2, "it is the last time, it's time for us to give away what we have to gain eternal life for those who will hear and believe." It's not that our money buys salvation, it is that money invested in that way demonstrates where our hearts are. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, the Apostle Paul in talking about the fact that we were living in the end times says, "It remains that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoice not, and they that buy as though they possess not and they that use this world as not abusing it for the fashion of the world is passing away." Don't get into it. Whatever is necessary or whatever comes as a blessing of God to you, accept with a thankful heart but take your resources and invest them in eternity. This is the last day.

And the man who piles up everything he can for his own pleasure, the man of Luke 12 who sits back and says, "Eat, drink and be merry, you've got it all," is the man of whom it says, "He that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God and that man...to that man, God said, You fool, this night your soul will be required of you." You're a fool to amass a fortune to yourself, hoarding it from the purposes for which God gave it to you. Very basic.

In fact, later in that same twelfth chapter of Luke, Jesus says, "Rather seek the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." Just seek the Kingdom and let God add what He chooses to add. And don't be afraid, little flock, it's your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. You're not going to be poor, you're going to be eternally rich. You're going to be so rich you can't even imagine it. You're going to be so rich forever that it's beyond yours and my ability to even conceive of it. So sell what you have and give alms, give to the poor. Provide yourselves bags which don't grow old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth

corrupts, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Don't stash your stuff. Use it for the Kingdom.

And in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 17, "Charge them that are rich in this age that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches but in God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to share. And thus laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life." The only way to live in the light of the coming of Christ is investing in His glory and in His Kingdom. These people claim to be Christians but obviously they hoard it, everything they had. The damning sin of uselessly hoarding your wealth brought about judgment.

There's a second sin. Not only was their wealth uselessly hoarded but it was unjustly robbed in the first place. They weren't even entitled to it. Notice verse 4. "Behold the wages of the laborers who have reaped down or mowed literally your fields which is kept back by fraud cries out and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." Instead of being generous with the poor, they exploited them. Instead of giving to the poor, they withheld from them. Instead of giving them the small wage that they had earned, they kept it back. And verse 4 begins with the word "behold" because it's almost inconceivable, hard to believe, so utterly contrary to their claim to be Christians, so shocking a behavior. The pay or the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields...it speaks of day laborers. In the economy of Israel there were people who hung around the marketplace. Every morning they would go to the marketplace in their village and they would wait hoping that someone would come to hire a day laborer. They would work for whatever agreed upon wage they could get. Old Testament law was very strict on how you paid day laborers.

For example, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy as God is laying down the regulations for the life of His people He says, "Thou shalt not oppress," verse 14, "a hired servant who is poor and needy whether he be of thy brethren or of the sojourner who is in thy land within thy gates, at his day...get that...at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it for he is poor and he sets his heart upon it lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be sin unto thee." He'll cry to God against you because if you don't pay him for that day he can't eat, he works to eat and to feed his family. He has no ongoing source of income and he must be paid before the sun goes down so that he may take his pay and feed his family.

In Leviticus 19:13, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him, the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." You pay him before the night falls, the same idea. Strict pay for day laborers.

A perfect illustration of this kind of aspect of Jewish economy is found in Matthew chapter 20 where it says, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a man as a householder, went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard and he agreed with his laborers for a denarius a day." Met them in the

marketplace and they negotiated and they went off to work. You remember the parable. He hired people all during the day and at the end chose to pay them all the same. But the point that I want to draw is simply that was a normal part of the economy of Israel. The agricultural cycle demanded that. You couldn't employ people all year long, only at the time of planting and the time of harvesting. And so day laborers were much a part of the economy.

And he says to these wicked rich people, "These people have come and they have mowed your fields, they have worked for you, reaped down your crops and you have kept back by fraud the wages that are due to them." The verb "kept back by fraud" is one word aphustereo, it means to withhold by default, or to withhold by fraud. It doesn't indicate delay, it indicates total default. It isn't that they delayed in paying, it's that they refused to pay. They robbed the poor people.

Now it doesn't necessarily mean that they didn't pay them anything, what it means is they didn't pay them what they were due. And so the rich then had money hoarded that they unjustly gained. And again he personifies those wages like he personified the rust and in verse 4, "The wages cry out..." krazo, present active, it's like screaming. That very same verb is used of the screaming of demons when they're expelled from their victims. You'll find it used, for example, in Mark 9:26 and Luke 9:39. And what James is saying is, the wages themselves cry out to God. They are personified. Much like other inanimate objects that cry out for justice. Do you remember Genesis 4:10? How that the blood of Abel cries out from the ground for justice. Or in Genesis 18:20, Genesis 19:13, it says that the sin of Sodom cries out to God.

Does God here? Look back at verse 4. "And the cries of them who have reaped," and here we have the cries of the people, "are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." I read you the Old Testament text, Deuteronomy 24:15, you better pay their wages or the cries of the people who have been defrauded will reach the ears of God. And this is what this says. It's as if James took it right out of Deuteronomy 24:15 and he says the cries of those who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. The painful cry of the robbed victims, the poor defrauded people reach the ears of God. And they continue to echo in His righteous ears until He makes it right.

By the way, "Lord of sabaoth" is a marvelous thought. Sabaoth is untranslated, it's transliterated right out of the Greek into the English, it means Lord of hosts. And that means Lord of the army of heaven, Lord who is the almighty commander of all the hosts of heaven, Lord of the supernatural army. In other words, the one who hears you is the almighty God who commands the armies of heaven and who will call that army into judgment. And by the way, do I need to remind you that when the Lord steps out in judgment it is His army that is the executioner? In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "inflaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." Who does that? Who comes in flaming fire? Verse 7, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." The angels are the agents of judgment. In the parables of Matthew 13 it is the angels who reap. It is the angels who separate. They're the agents of judgment. And so the cry of the poor defrauded people reaches the

ears of God.

I've been thinking about that lately. I've been thinking about these media ministries that rob poor people. I've been reading that the average donor is a 55 to 65-year-old middle America woman who has very little. And that these people, trusting people are sending their money to robbers and thieves who are living in opulent luxury and self-consumption that beggars language to describe at the expense of the people they've defrauded in the name of Christ. It's a frightening sin for which to be guilty. They have robbed people in the name of Christ and they have, in fact, robbed God because I fear that they have received much of the money that would have been given to that genuine movement of God that occurs in a local church where those people might attend. Money could have ended up in service to Him, it ends up in some evangelist's pocket, buying his cars and boats and houses and trips and hanging jewelry all over his wife and whatever else. It's a very very serious issue.

When people in the name of Christ or in the name of any religion rob people for supposedly the sake of spiritual ends, only to pour millions and millions into their own indulgence, they certainly are living illustrations of verse 4. And a frightening judgment falls on those who defraud, those who default. First of all, that which they possess having stolen from other people cries out against them. And furthermore, those people who see them exposed and see the defrauding will cry out to God, the God who commands the armies of heaven in eternal judgment, and I believe that God will act. The judgment falls on the wicked wealthy because they uselessly hoarded and unjustly robbed wealth and they face the judgment of hell.

There's a third sin and they all overlap. Self-indulgently spent...their robbed and hoarded wealth they spend on themselves, verse 5, "You lived...you have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton...is the Old English word...you have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." After increasing your wealth through robbery and after hoarding it all, you now use it for your own indulgence. And to express the self-indulgence of the wealthy wicked he uses three verbs. First of all, notice verb 5, "You have lived," literally it reads, "You have lived luxuriously on the earth." Truphao, the word in itself doesn't necessarily relate to sin. It means basically softness. You have lived in softness, soft luxury is a good way to say it. You're no Robin Hood. You're not stealing from people to give to other people, you're stealing from people to pad your own bed. Extravagant comfort, that's the idea. You have indulged in extravagant comfort. Listen, God doesn't necessarily want you to sit on a soap box and sleep on a straw mat. But you've carried it way beyond anything reasonable.

And it follows. Look at what we're seeing today. These people who have amassed these huge amounts of money, who have robbed the people that they have taken it from have consumed it on themselves. Oh they'll want to point to this over here and that over there and this good thing over here, but frankly, the massive amount of it is to give them soft luxury, a life style of indulgence, personal indulgence...that is the issue. To live way beyond what is normal, what is acceptable.

What do you think you're going to see?...they said about John the Baptist, Luke 7:25. "A man in soft clothing? Behold, they who are gorgeously appareled and live delicately are in king's courts," not anymore, they're on TV...naming Jesus name. You watch them. You ever see them with the same outfit on twice? Ever? A fortune, an absolute fortune is spent on their wardrobe, their cars, their houses, their furnishings. It just follows.

And he goes further. Soft luxury, then he says, "And you have been wanton." Or as the NAS puts it, "You have led a life of wanton pleasure." To put it simply, you gave yourself the vice...luxury leads to vice. You start living the soft life and it takes its toll. And you begin to be consumed with your own pleasure and your own pleasure takes over and then you want all the pleasures that you desire and luxury turns to vice. We've seen it. We've watched it. It's played right out in front of us. She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives, 1 Timothy 5:6 says. But people live it out. They live out that wanton pleasure mad vice filled life that really begins when someone wants everything that makes them feel good. Soft luxury leads to vice. It plunges people into dissipation.

A life you see here...let me put it to you another way...a life without self-denial is a life that soon runs out of control in every area. People totally concerned with luxury and pleasure can't restrain themselves. A man with money closes his eyes to the needs of other people, closes his eyes to the work of God, but has his wide open to his own self-gratification. And he lives to gratify himself. I watch these people spend money like a drunk sailor. It's absolutely beyond comprehension. And then to indulge themselves in every imaginable vice...

And then thirdly he says, and this is a climax. He's moving down the ladder deeper into the pit. Thirdly he says, "You have fattened your hearts." Stop at that point. Trepho means to feed, nourish or fatten. It's used of an animal. It's used in the Septuagint of Jeremiah 46:21 about fattening up calves. And what do you do when you get a calf? If you've ever raised cattle or any kind of animal like that, you fatten them up for what? For slaughter, that's the whole point. You fatten them up because the fatter they are the more they're going to bring you on the hoof when you weigh them, and that's why you fatten them. And he says you fatten your hearts, you've satiated yourself. That's right, you've indulged yourself to the limit. If you wanted to buy it, you bought it. If you wanted to do it, you did it. And you drank the cup dry. You started with soft luxury and then you led yourself right into vice and you have satiated every desire you've got. When it says you've fattened your hearts it means your inner desires. You sought to fill out every single self-indulgence.

That reminded me as I was thinking about that of a man. His name was Solomon and he wrote a book called Ecclesiastes and this is what he said in chapter 2 verse 4, "I made for myself great works, I built houses, I planted vineyards. I made gardens and orchards. I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made pools of water to water there with the wood that brings forth trees. I got servants and maidens and had servants born in my house. I had great possessions of herds and flocks above all

that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered also silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got men singers and women singers and delights of the sons of men as musical instruments and that of all sorts." Boy, I had one long party. "So I was great." Modest fellow, isn't he? "And I increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem, also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy for my heart rejoiced in all my labor and this was my portion of all my labor. I worked for it, I deserve it." Have I heard that recently? I worked hard for it, I deserve it.

"And then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labor that I had labored to do and behold all was nothing and there was no profit under the sun, it was vexation." And Solomon says I got it all and it was nothing. Worse than that, worse than being nothing, it brings about judgment.

Notice that little phrase at the end of verse 5, "As in a day of slaughter." What is a day of slaughter? It has to be a day of judgment. That's a frightening depiction of judgment. You know how they killed animals? Same way they kill them today, slit their throats. You're just like a fat cow headed to have your throat slit. Very very vivid language. And the wealthy wicked who have uselessly hoarded the money they unjustly robbed and have self-indulgently spent it are some...are simply fattened calves waiting the judgment of God. You say, "Is there any hope that anything could change?" Of course, if there would be repentance and true saving faith.

In Isaiah 34, I was thinking about this and I want to take just a moment as we draw this message to a conclusion...not quite yet, don't leave me, but I want to take a moment, this phrase haunts me "as in a day of slaughter." And I was reading Isaiah 34, "For my sword...verse 5...shall be bathed in heaven, behold it will come down on Edom and on the people of my curse to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness and with the blood of lambs and goats with the fat of kidneys of rams for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild oxen shall come down with them and the bullocks with the bulls and their land shall be soaked with blood and their dust made fat with fatness, for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance." And that tells me what James had in mind when he said the day of slaughter. He was talking about the day of the Lord's vengeance...the day of judgment on the wicked...the day of the Lord's vengeance when He comes with a sword and starts slaughtering.

In the forty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah verse 10, just listen, "For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries...and listen...and the sword shall devour and it shall be filled to the full and made drunk with their blood." And in the fiftieth chapter, two chapters from the end of Jeremiah and verse 26, "Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses, cast her up as heaps, destroy her utterly, let nothing of her be left, slay all her bullocks, let them go down to the slaughter. Woe unto them for the day is come the time of their judgment."

Now there were many days of the Lord. Every time God came in judgment it was the day of the Lord. And there will be a day of the Lord for the wicked wealthy of every age. James looks ahead to that day yet to come when God through Christ and the holy angels comes with His sword in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who know not God that have rejected Jesus Christ. And I believe James is looking at that great judgment yet to come.

In the thirty-seventh of Ezekiel, you can read further about the same kind of thing. But let me take you to Revelation for a moment and chapter 19. And this I know will be familiar turf for most of you. In verse 17 of Revelation 19 we read this, "And I saw an angel," and now we're looking at the final judgment, "standing in the sun he cried with a loud voice saying to all the fowl that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and them that sit on them and the flesh of all men free and enslaves, small and great." And that's the slaughter of Armageddon. That's the ultimate final holocaust. What brings it about? The coming of Christ. In verses 11 and following He comes on a white horse, His eyes are a flame of fire, He comes, verse 15, and out of His mouth a sharp sword to smite the nations.

As I said a moment ago, and let me make it clear, there are many days of the Lord, days in which God brought vengeance and judgment. When a wicked wealthy person dies, that for him in a sense is a day of the Lord, when he faces God in judgment. But there's coming an ultimate judgment time that really stretches through all the events of the Second Coming from Armageddon right out to the Great White Throne, when God will finally judge. An eternal slaughter takes place as the wicked wealthy who have never turned from their sin and embraced Christ are sent forever to hell. So, James says they have self-indulgently spent their wealth and will be damned because of such sin.

Finally, lastly, he culminates a denunciation of them not only for uselessly hoarding their money, not only for unjustly robbing, not only for self-indulgently spending but for ruthlessly acquiring. Verse 6, "You have condemned and killed the just," stop at that point.

You have condemned and killed the just. Hoarding greed led to fraud. Fraud led to self-indulgence. And self-indulgence becomes so consuming that you will literally do anything to sustain your life style. You will condemn and kill. You will murder. And the implication here is they use the courts...they use the courts. You have condemned and killed the just.

You remember the Old Testament God established in the nation of Israel courts where a judication of justice was to carry on? Deuteronomy 17:8 to 13 is where God laid down those courts. And then God commanded that the judges were not to be greedy. Any judge in Israel from Exodus chapter 18 on was not to be greedy. They were not to be partial, according to Leviticus 19:15. They were not to tolerate perjury, according to Deuteronomy 19. They were never to take bribes, Isaiah 33:15 talks

about that, so does Micah 3:11 and Micah 7:3. So God ordained courts and judges who were not to be greedy, partial, not to take bribes, not to tolerate perjury, they were to seek justice for everyone. Everyone was to get justice. And yet even in Israel of old there was tremendous corruption...tremendous corruption.

Amos again writes about it. "I know your manifold transgressions...Amos 5:12...and your mighty sins, you afflict the just, you take a bribe and the judges turn aside the poor in the gate." Then in verse 15, "Hate the evil, love the good and establish justice." God says you have perjured, you have been bribed, you have perverted justice. It's pretty standard stuff. The rich will always try to use the system to effect negatively the poor.

The word "to condemn" katadikazo means to sentence someone. And the word "put to death," phoneuo means to murder. You have sentenced people and effectively you've murdered them, judicial murder. You literally have used the courts to murder people.

Go back to James 2:6, we had an allusion to that. You have despised the poor, do not rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats? Sure. That's what they had to endure. The murder of the incarceration of innocent people, would you deny that in biblical times? Of course not, not if you read the biblical record. The Apostles, the majority of them died as unjustly condemned criminals. The Apostle Paul certainly was incarcerated and gave his life unjustly. Today people use the courts to get rich, to abuse the innocent. If nothing else they use lawsuits.

And so the point I want you to see here is that James is saying you start out amassing. Your amassed fortune in part is due to defrauding others. You then begin to spend it on your lusts which are so consumed that you literally destroy people in the process...you destroy them.

Someone was telling me the other day that...and I don't know anything personal about this woman Jessica Hawn, but that the tragedy of the destruction of that woman's life is beyond description. There are many others who are destroyed in any kind of self-indulgent scandal. People are used. People are abused. And sometimes killed.

And James ends the indictment interestingly enough with an interesting little statement about these poor abused people, "And he does not resist you...and he does not resist you." Admittedly it is difficult to be dogmatic about who "he" represents. But it seems best that the "he" is the just, the innocent one who was abused...the innocent one who was destroyed for the sake of fulfilling the lust of the wicked wealthy. He doesn't resist you. Maybe he's a believer and in the grace of the meekness of Christ he doesn't fight back. Maybe he wants to be like his Lord of whom Peter said, "When He was reviled, He reviled not again but simply committed Himself into the care of God." Maybe he wanted to live out those wonderful truths of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. You remember don't you verse, I think it's verse 39? "Whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other

also. And if any man will sue you at the law and take away your coat, let him have your cloak. And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, that is carrying his burden, go with him two miles. Give to him that asks and from him that would borrow from you, turn you not away." Maybe this is such a wonderful righteous believer, the word "just" there means righteous, this is a righteous person, doesn't fight back. Maybe he's so rich in faith that he commits himself to God like Christ did.

In a sense that even makes it worse. And why the condemnation of the rich? Because of their useless hoarding, their unjust robbery, their self-indulgent spending and their ruthless acquisition. Fulfilling their lusts at the expense of the destruction of anybody and everybody who gets in their way. What a...what a travesty, what a frightening way to waste the substance that God has given us.

I was reading this week also about Count Zinzindorf(?). He was a German who lived about 1700 to 1760, he was instrumental by God's grace in beginning a missionary society known as The Merravians(?) who really pioneered world missions. He was very wealthy. And he gave everything he had to the ministry of the spread of the gospel through the Merravian mission. The very antithesis of everything we see here. Anybody who has resources makes a choice to use it for the Kingdom or to waste it and end up in the judgment of God.

Now let me say what I said at the beginning. This was written to those who claimed to be Christians but were not, as evidenced by their love of money. But at the same time, we as believers can learn from this because we don't want to repeat the sins of the hypocrites, do we? We want to be sure we use what we have for the advancement of the Kingdom, for the glory of the Lord and that we don't love the world, that we're not concerned to be friends of the world, that we don't want to lay up our treasure in this world, that we don't want to be lovers of money. Quite the contrary, we want to use every resource we have for the sake of the exaltation of Christ. May it be so, especially in these last days. Join me in prayer.

Father, we know that these things are not new to us but what a refreshing and needful reminder they are for how easy it is for us to fall into the terrible materialistic trap of the time in which we live. Lord, we have the best of things. I know there are faithful ministers more faithful than I, pastors of churches in Third World countries who have one suit of clothes and walk everywhere they go and eat because someone gives them a meal and are thankful and feel rich. And I know, Lord, You have blessed our society more than the societies of the world and thus You have laid at our very feet a great responsibility. Help us not to fall into the sins of the wicked wealthy who will be judged. Help us not to uselessly hoard but to give and give and give and give and then trust you to replenish even as every season the crops grow again. Help us to live by faith. Help us never to defraud, holding back that which is justly that belonging to someone else. And help us to know as Christians that if my brother has need what I have belongs to him and to hold it back is to rob him. And help us, Lord, with what we do have that You've given us so much, houses and cars and clothing, and much of it is Your grace and we accept it as that, but, Lord, help us not to use it only to indulge ourselves but to use our

homes as places where Jesus Christ is exalted and where people can find rest and provision and love. And help us, Lord, not to become so consumed with ourselves that we abuse and condemn and misuse other people to gain our own ends, but ever and always to look on the things of others. Don't let us fall into these sins for which the rich face judgment.

And, Lord, we pray as well that if there are some in our fellowship tonight who do not know the Savior and maybe have had their heart penetrated by the Word tonight that they might seek forgiveness for a wasted substance, not used in the glory of Christ and that they might come to the feet of the Savior to receive that free forgiveness that is there for all repentant sinners and be delivered out of judgment into light, into hope, into life eternal, newly motivated to use what they have for Your glory. To that end we pray for Christ's sake. Amen.

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