

January 24, 2021
The Bridge Bible Fellowship
Pastor Paul S. Brown
James 5:1-6

“Wicked Wealthy: Wake Up and Weep!”

A. Who (1) – “you rich” (cf. Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:4; Mt. 27:57; 13:22; 19:22ff)

B. What (1)

1. Wake up! (1) – “Come now”

2. Weep while wailing! (1)

3. Wretchedness is coming! (Lk. 16:19-31; Mt. 13:41-42; 22:13; Jude 13)

C. Why (2-6)

1. Hoarding (2-3; cf. Mt. 6:19ff; Lk. 12:33; 16:9)

2. Fraud (4; cf. Dt. 24:14f; Prov. 14:31; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5)

3. Self-indulgence (5; cf. Lev. 19:13; Dt. 24:14f; Amos 6:1-7; Mt. 13:39-41, 49; 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7f)

4. Injustice (6; cf. 1 Kings 21; James 2:6; Zeph. 1:18)

So What?

Discussion & Application:

1. In James 5:1-6, James calls out the wicked wealthy (“rich”). What is “**retribution theology**”? (see <https://www.gotquestions.org/retribution-theology.html>) Why would this passage shock those who believe in retribution theology? Is it inherently wicked to be wealthy? Were there any righteous wealthy people in the Bible? What are some **temptations** that wealthy people face?
2. Two of the three commands in these 6 verses are synonyms: “**Come now**” (v. 1) and “**Behold**” (v. 4). What is the point of those commands? Why was it necessary for James to give those commands? What might keep wealthy people from being aware of the things that James warns them about?
3. Look at how **NOISY** this passage is (weep, howl, witness, cries out, outcry). Why does James use such loud, emotional language? Are loud, emotional outbursts a legitimate reaction to an awareness of personal sin and coming judgment? Other than James 4:6-10, what other passages describe this kind of reaction? Why do you think people are often calm about being made aware of their personal sins? What is missing in their theology?
4. God frequently accompanies commands and instructions in the Bible with good reasons **why** the people need to do what He says (i.e., 5th Commandment – Ex. 20:12). The world often gives contradictory commands and instructions to people with a long list of why they should do it the world’s way. Many Christian leaders & parents, on the other hand, often say something like, “Yours is not to question why, yours is just to do or die.” What are the benefits of telling people why they should follow your commands, instructions, or wise counsel?
5. How does James describe the problem of **hoarding** in vv. 2-3? Why do people hoard things? What does this say about their trust in God? What does it say about their love for their neighbor? Are you guilty of hoarding things? What could you do this week with some of your “stuff” so it can be a blessing to others in need and not end up the way James describes in vv. 2-3?
6. In what way were the rich people guilty of **fraud** in v. 4? Why would they think they were going to get away with it? What are some ways that people defraud others today? What are some excuses people might make for doing it?
7. The rich were also guilty of **self-indulgence** in v. 5. Our world glorifies self-indulgence (fashion magazines, live of the rich & famous, etc.). What is wrong with being self-indulgent? What are some ways that even “poor” or “middle class” people in America are guilty of self-indulgence?
8. Finally, the rich were guilty of **injustice** in v. 6 (see 1 Kings 21 for an example). This is a hot topic in our culture today. What kinds of injustices are people talking about in America? How are they connecting wealth with injustice? Why do wealthy people at times literally get away with murder? Will they ultimately get away with it? What are some less drastic forms of injustices that even believers might practice toward others?
9. Why do most commentators believe James is talking about **unsaved** rich people in 5:1-6? If those people weren’t even there when the letter was read to the congregation, what was the point of including it? What impact would this have on the congregation that was mostly poor people? What lessons would they learn about wealth, power, sin, and coming judgment?
10. **Memorize James 5:1-6.** Meditate upon the wrong and the right uses for wealth. Ask the Lord to make you a better steward of all that He has entrusted to you both now and in the future. Give away some of your excess before it rots, is moth-eaten, or rusts. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” “Lay up treasures in heaven.”