

The Snare of Wealth

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James 5:1-6

April 2, 2023

[Sermon Audio](#)

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James 5:1–6 [1] Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. [2] Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. [3] Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. [4] Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. [5] You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. [6] You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. (ESV)

I. The Pronouncement of Judgment

1. The selfish stockpiling of wealth (verses 2-3)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy” -- Matthew 6:20

- God gives resources so that we can experience His provision and share with others in need.

“God has not appointed gold for rust, nor garments for moths; but, on the contrary, He has designed them as aids and helps to human life.” -- John Calvin

- When we simply stockpile all that we have for ourselves and don’t share it with others, it rusts, it corrodes, it doesn’t function for the way God intends.
- We tend to think wealth will make us secure, but it is a false hope, a snare.

2. Wealth gathered by fraud (verse 4)

3. A lifestyle of self-indulgence (verse 5)

4. Oppression of the Righteous (verse 6)

II. Application

1. Check your heart - beware of the snare of wealth

- James is not intending to pronounce judgement categorically on any and all who have wealth. For that to be so, God would have had to have been opposed to people that He blessed in the Old Testament like Abraham, and Job and Solomon, for they had significant wealth.
- That being said, it is true that scripture repeatedly warns that wealth can be a very strong obstacle to Christian discipleship. Remember the parable of the sower (Matt. 13). It was the “cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches” that choked out the Word as it was sown into hearts.

- The deceit of wealth can choke out a growing love for Christ.

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” -- 1 Timothy 6:9-10

- A snare is a trap that you don't immediately see -- a trap often used for animals, usually covered up so that its not detected.
- It has all the appearance of being safe until you actually tread on it, then it closes in on you.
- That's why Jesus said “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions.” -- Luke 12:15
- Money is a danger for us - apparently its easy for us to covet, to desire that which isn't ours. We like to build an abundance of possessions. We can all be tempted by the love of money exists in our hearts. We think that money brings safety, security, help.
- We can mistakenly put our hope in money. We also like the things that money can buy. We like nice things, not broken down things.

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions.” -- Luke 12:15

2. Lay up your treasure in heaven, not on earth

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” -- Matthew 6:19-21

- What does it mean to lay up your treasure in heaven? It means to invest in the things that matter for eternity – like the building of God's church. It means giving of your time and resources to build the kingdom of God. It means using what God's given to promote and further joy in Christ, for yourself and for others, because He is your joy.
- God is your treasure and since He's your treasure, laying up your treasure in heaven is using the resources He's given to demonstrate that God Himself, and not money, is your great love.

“He who lays up treasure in heaven looks forward to eternity.” -- Randy Alcorn

“Therefore, laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven would be living in such a way as to maximize God as your treasure. Handle your money in such a way as to show that God, and not money, is your treasure.” -- John Piper

3. Actively proclaim the only true Treasure, the everlasting Christ!

Questions for Discussion/Application

- Re-read the text, James 5:1-6. What initial insights and observations do you have from reading this passage?

- Money in and of itself is not evil. However, as Jeremy said, it can be a snare to us. In what ways can a desire for wealth become a snare? What temptations tend to accompany wealth? In what ways can we be tempted to find our hope and security in money?
- What does it look like for us practically to lay up treasure in heaven and seek first God's kingdom when it comes to our finances?
- When it comes to generous giving, how do we balance both biblical principles of prudence/planning and lavish generosity (2 Cor 8:1-5)?
- Consider playing [this video clip](#) by Randy Alcorn on generous giving. How does what Alcorn says here encourage or challenge you?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help each of us to not put our hope and trust in money or in things money can buy, but in God alone.