

Sermon or Lesson: James 5:1-3b (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Comprehensive Accountability With Adverse Consequences Awaits The Wealthy

INTRO: Isn't it really aggravating when you hear reports about government officials taking extravagant trips on taxpayers' money for contrived purposes, and there is no accountability or consequences for those officials? Government officials are given the responsibility of managing taxpayers' money appropriately and for the good of the population, and yet they violate this duty they have been hired to do.

Our perspective on this scenario is very similar to God's perspective on how wealthy people violate the duty God has given them by misusing their wealth.

v.1 - READ

[Lesson Question: What is the intent and purposes of the contents of verse 1?]

SECTION POINT: This is an alert for "you rich people" to listen to.

- - The focus in James is next placed upon "rich people", which is likely a continuation of the principles delineated in verses 4:13-17, because people with affluence are usually the ones who successfully go to a city, stay there for a year, carry on business, and make money (v.4:13); it takes money to make money.
- - "You rich people" are to now listen - to pay attention; this forthcoming information is being told to you for your benefit.
- - The principles within this forthcoming information are valid and applicable for all rich people everywhere, for those who are unbelievers and even for those who are believers among the brethren (vv.4:11; 5:7), fellow believers in churches and ministries.

SECTION POINT: This is the giving of advice coupled with an advance warning.

- - The warning is that "misery" is going to come upon "you rich people", one day in the future. (vv.4,5,7)
 - - This "misery" will be the result of accountability you will be subject to when you face "the Lord Almighty" in judgment, regarding how you used your wealth. (vv.4,2,3)
 - - Advice is being given here to "weep and wail" now, mourn profusely, lament over this misery that awaits you on Judgment Day, like in verse 4:9 we are to "grieve, mourn, and wail" over our sin and worldliness.
 - - This impending misery will surely come upon you - there is no escaping the Judgment Day accountability before God, His verdict of you being guilty, and His adverse sentence for you that contains misery, "hardship; wretchedness, calamity", and distress upon you. (Strong's #5004)
 - - The advice being given here is to become aware of, fully fathom, and lament now the adversity that awaits you.
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vv.2-3a - READ

[Lesson Question: How will the issue of wealth of rich people be handled by God on Judgment Day?]

SECTION POINT: Your wealth will be instantly reduced to nothing.

- - One phenomenon or reality that will bring you misery is that your wealth, your "riches, money, possessions, abundance, stored valuables" have rotted - become "putrefied, perished", and reprehensible. (Strong's #4149, #4595)
 - - Even your fancy clothes have been reduced to refuse bits and pieces, like being eaten by moths.
 - - Furthermore, your accumulated money, your currency, your vast amount of imperishable gold and silver have corroded, have perished and disintegrated into being worthless dust.
 - - All of your material wealth has been reduced to nothing-ness before the judgment of God.
 - - God will pronounce that your wealth has no value in the afterlife or eternity, and consequently He will instantly and completely strip it away from you. (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15)
 - - On Judgment Day, "you rich people" will lose your wealth and all the prestige, status, influence, comforts, benefits, perks, and advantages that go with it in this life.
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v.3b - READ

SECTION POINT: How you managed your wealth will be comprehensively exposed and judged.

- - The loss of your wealth will be misery for you on Judgment Day, but your misery will get worse. There is more accountability with accompanying adverse consequences awaiting you regarding how you managed your wealth.
 - - The capital, currency, and wealth you did have will now on Judgment Day bear evidence and witness against you, in effect testifying how you inappropriately acquired and used it.
 - - The secret, hidden, disguised, devious, underhanded, dishonest, manipulative, scamming, fraudulent ways you managed your wealth will be revealed before the entire universe, and brought to bear in testimony against you.
 - - The ways you inappropriately managed your wealth will be used on Judgment Day as evidence to expose your despicableness and declare your guilt, eating away or burning away your reputation and any favorable position-of-standing you had hoped for during the judgment proceedings, which have thereupon turned against you.
 - - Ironically, the very wealth that previously brought you comfort and well-being in this life will on Judgment Day destroy your comfort and well-being, and furthermore thereupon bringing you misery, disrepute, shame, and loss.
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IMPLICATIONS:

[Lesson Question: In regard to the misuse of wealth by rich people, what other aspects can be extrapolated from this passage about how God will respond on Judgment Day?]

SECTION POINT: God will respond to you adversely.

- - You rich people will not be able to use your wealth on Judgment Day to buy your way out of this predicament nor to bring yourself relief from the misery you will incur.
 - - You rich people will not get positive reaction and treatment from God because of your wealth, nor will you get neutral treatment either, instead you can expect to get serious negative treatment from God because He sharply and steadfastly opposes how you used your wealth inappropriately from His perspective.
 - - God intended that your wealth or abundance is to be used for good (v.4:17), presumably that is why He allowed or ordained that you would receive so much.
 - - Therefore, on Judgment Day your wealth will testify both how you misused it and how you disused it - failing to do the good with it that God intended. (v.4:17)
 - - And accurate, just, and comprehensive accountability await you; nothing will remain hidden, undisclosed, secret, or disguised about how you gained and used your wealth.
 - - God will institute consequences, likely in the form of a verbal reprimand and in other non-verbal ways.
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- - This impending predicament you will certainly face probably comes as totally unexpected to you, not at all what you anticipate or have come to realize up until now.
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- - There are rich people in churches and ministries, who are busy conducting business to amass wealth when they should be engaged in doing the good they know they should be doing with their wealth. (vv.4:13; 1:17; 4:17; 2:15-16)

BIG IDEA: God will comprehensively hold accountable and adversely judge rich people for how they misuse their wealth.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you here today who have wealth, are you heeding this warning proclaimed in James 5:1-3b? Reminder: 'Don't shoot the messenger if you don't like the message'.
- - Do you realize the extent of the accountability and corresponding consequences that are coming for you on Judgment Day in regard to how you have managed your wealth and your financial dealings?
- - Can you envision the misery you will incur, losing every aspect of wealth you have devoted yourself to and relied upon? Being publicly denounced and reprimanded before the throne of God and all of creation?

- - Do you see the futility in how you have been managing your wealth so far, going about your business to amass more wealth which will instantly become worthless long-term?
 - - Do you fully comprehend the ramifications this impending accountability has on your life in the present and on your henceforth managing of your wealth?
 - - Are you willing, determined, and committed to change your ways now while you still have some time remaining, to manage your wealth in God-pleasing ways?
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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