

Title: The Peril (danger) of Riches

Text: James 5:1-6

Take your bibles, and turn with me to the book of James. Now, we are looking at (6B) on your outline. FAITH PRODUCES DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD. Last Sunday, we learned that THIS DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD EFFECTS HOW WE WILL PLAN FOR THE FUTURE....Today, we come to the second part of this message. And this DEALS WITH (2C) THE DANGERS OF RICHES. You see, real faith produces a dependence upon the Lord concerning our possessions.

James chapter 5 beginning with Vs 1...(READ Vs 1-6)

Prayer

Needless to say and without harping on a subject that you have heard before, America today is enjoying one of the most affluent societies that has ever existed in history. The poorest of us, today, is enjoying much in the way of riches and possessions. In fact, at no time in history has an individual in a society enjoyed so much by simply being average. For the average American, not the millionaires, the average American today is far wealthier when considered and placed in contrast with the history of the World. Thus, what James says about riches becomes a very important and needed message. For everyone of us is faced with the problem of materialism. We have all felt the pressures from a world of materialism. We are constantly being told that as long as we possess "things" or, if we can acquire "things", we will be happy. We will have "peace" and "prosperity."

Dangers

But, dear friends, the Bible warns us over and over again about the PERILS OF RICHES. And we have a good example, here, in James.

Now, as we begin, I would like to be very clear. This passage is not saying that it is wrong to have "possession". It is talking about your motives....about what you put first in your life....If God isn't first in your life, then your riches can cause many problems. And with that in mind I would like to share with you three principles about riches which make them a danger...~~if we don't realize that the things we have come from God~~

(10) Number one, in Vs 1, we see that riches can cause much sorrow.

Vs 1 says, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you." Riches can bring sorrow.

In 1 Timothy 6:10 the Apostle Paul wrote, "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a sorrow." Riches can cause sorrow.

The wisest man of all the ancient kings, King Soloman, wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:13: "There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his sorrow."

Now, Soloman possesses much wealth. The Bible says that silver and gold were as stones in the streets in Soloman's day. He was a very rich man. So, it isn't having wealth that is wrong. It is your attitude and motive behind what you have that can cause you sorrow. Soloman knew that if your motive and attitude wasn't centered in ~~Jesus Christ~~ ^{A Thimoteo - Christ} _{Jesus Christ}, riches will captivate a person's heart so that he can not see anything else. And he will then assume that "riches" and "things" will bring him the peace and happiness that his heart desires. But, dear friends, as Solman learned and we need to learn, they can not do it. For riches will break our hearts and cause much sorrow.

and

Now, I am not talking about the "rich people of our society" as we often refer to them. I am talking about we who are average. About our daily possession and needs and the wealth that we have accummulated, whether it be a thousand dollars or a hundred thousand dollars. Riches can cause sorrow.

-3-
attitude

And if our motives and ~~thanksgiving~~ ^{attitude} is not centered in Christ, riches can break up and divid homes. I have had the privilege of counseling with ~~many~~ ^{many} couples who are having marriage problems. And many times the cause of these problems is money. Money and the use and handling of money is the number one reason for divorus in America today. We desire to have things and there is a struggle between the husband and the wife over what we should have and how we should spend the money. Money causes more problems in the home than any other single item.

*Why can't you be like other men
Go out and get me some money*

omit

Riches will often break-up the relationship between parents and children and cuase much sorrow. Young people are taught that having "things" are important in life. They are taught that money will bring "status and ~~power~~ popularity." And they have got to have these "things". The car becomes the symbol of wealth and independence for a young person...WHY?....Because adults live that way.

But, oh, friends, the sorrow it can bring to a family. It wreaks homes... It wreaks lives....And money when it is not properly used under the guidance and direction of God, when we are not thankful for the riches we have, can bring much sorrow to the human heart.

How, can we aviod this problem?.....Psalms 100 tells us:

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth
Serve the Lord with gladness(that means with your money)
Come before Him with joyfull singing.
Know that the Lord Himself is God;
It is He who has made us(includeing the wealth we have)
And we are his people and the sheep of His pasture.

Danger

(2D) Now, we come to the second PERIL OF RICHES. James tells us in Vs 2 and 3 that riches lack security. Vs 2 says "Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure."

Now, this passage tells us that RICHES LACK SECURITY IN TWO WAYS....

(1E) First, they lack security in bringing joy and happiness that last. "Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten....

How many of us have purchased an item and boy it looked so wonderful when we brought it home? But, it didn't take too long before it started to look old. You buy a beautiful dress or suit only to have it go out of style or fall apart. You buy a new car and then some guy hits you.....Or, the paint peels and it begins to rust.....

James reminds us of something that John talked about in I John 2...that the world is passing away. It cannot last. And all the possessions we have, no matter how valuable they may be, they cannot bring lasting joy and happiness that the heart desires. *Only Jesus Can do That*

Do I need to remind this congregation, this morning, that some of the world's most wealthy men who have lived in these United States have died men of broken hearts. The record is so clear and so full of names. I am sure that you have seen that little booklet about the nations 10 wealthiest men. 7 out of the 10 committed suicide. Most of them were unhappy with life. Riches lack security in bringing joy and happiness that last.

Turn with me to the book of Ecclesiastes (Psa., Prov., Ecc.) and let's read a passage from chapter 2. These are the words of God's prophet, Solomon. Ecc. chapter 2 beginning at Vs 4....(READ 2:4-11)....

All was vanity...or literal "soap-bubbles". Here is a man who gathered everything his heart could desire and what was his conclusion: THEY DO NOT SATISFY. So, God is teaching through James that riches lack security and will not bring lasting joy and happiness.

(2nd) But, there is a second thought, here, that I would like you to see. In Vs 3, James tells us that "gold and silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you; and that we try to store up treasure for the last days."

And what that is saying is that riches lack security in avoiding the judgment of God....

I would like you to notice something in Vs 3. It says that gold and silver has rusted. NOW, FRIENDS, THAT IS NOT TRUE...Gold and silver do not rust. SO, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THAT PHRASE?

God through James is presenting this in a form to make a point. That in trying to avoid judgement a person will accumulate much wealth. He will try to satisfy his own heart and ignore the fact that one day he must give an account to God. And on that day, when we will face God, it will be as though our gold and silver had rusted. Because it will be worthless and without value. That is how ^{powerful} all of our possessions will become in the day of judgment. In fact, ^{the Bible} says that our possessions in the day of judgment will be a witness against us. And if we have lived for ourselves and have left God out of our plans and have acquired riches unto our own glory....then it will be a witness against us in the judgment. For it will be like rust...worthless and without value..

Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 14 says: "God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

So, you see, dear friends, God, one day, will require an account from us. We will give an account of what we have done with what God has given to us. And if we have acquired riches unto ourselves with no thought of God and tomorrow...then we will stand naked before God in the judgement. And our riches will be a witness against us....Very important...

Now, how do we avoid this problem? *This is a danger*

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

You see, our security is in Christ. For Jesus taught that all things are from him, and all things are through Him, and all things will return unto Him. And by practicing an attitude of thanksgiving which causes us to say with the Apostle Paul: "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but, one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

Dear friends, if God has belessed you with certain riches -- then use what God has given you for his glory - Lay up treasures in heaven.

(3D) This leads us to the third danger that James mentions. In VS 4-6, James is telling us that RICHES CAN PRODUCE SELFISHNESS...SELFISHNESS..And I want YOU to see this in a number of ways.

(1E) Number one, in Vs 4, we see that riches can produce selfishness in the methods we have of dealing with other people. Vs 4 says: "Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of hosts."

How Can we apply that verse

Now, what is he talking about? This verse is condemning one very popular method of getting riches. Namely, to hire men and then to drive them in such a way as to make money on their labor. Riches produce selfishness, when we use people for our own gain.

(2E) Secondly, according to Vs 5, riches produce selfishness in our manner of life. Vs 5 says, "you have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter."

Life style

What is James saying? He is saying that we become like cattle and hogs who do nothing but feed themselves. Unconsciously we are fattening ourselves for our own slaughter.

You say, "that is an alfull thing to say. Do you mean that this is what God really thinks about what we are doing?" OH, YES! IF we are storing up in our lives possessions for ourselves with no thought of God's will or direction. And Cod's Word is teaching that one day they will turn on us in the judgment. And God will reveal to us that we have lived for self. And not for him.

(3) Then third, riches ^{can} produce selfishness in the means by which we try to get what we want. Vs 6 says: "you have condemned and put to death the righteous man, he does not resist you."

What is the point? Everyone of us has had nothing to do with the possession we have accumulated. And yet most of us will leave this service today and say: "WILL, THAT IS NOT RIGHT. I HAVE WORKED HARD FOR WHAT I HAVE. I HAVE WORKED HARD FOR EVERY DIME THAT I HAVE."

And so you say this is yours. IS IT?... "He owns the cattle on a thousand hills the wealth in every land."

I Timothy 6:7 teaches that we have brought nothing into the world and it is certain that we will carry nothing out. One day we will stand naked before God. We will be striped of all our "possessions" and "things" and "wealth" and God will face us on that day with what we have done with what He has given to us. And you who have received little, little will be required of you. But you that have received much, much will be required of you.

Turn with me to I Cor. Chapter 3 verse 11... Now, this passage is written to the christian...not the unbeliever. But, the person who has accepted Jesus Christ as saviour.....I Cor 3:11- 15.....(Read)

You see, when we stand before the throne of God as believers, we will not be judged for eternal life. That is settled the moment we accept Christ into our life. The moment you believe on Christ and receive Him, you have eternal life. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." But, the Bible does teach that there will be this event called the judgment seat of Christ. And the things that will be judged there will be the things we have done and how we have treated our wealth and riches and ^{our talents} things which God ^{has} givaen to us. In that day God will judge us, and only the treasures that are laid up in heaven will last...the rest will go up in smoke and be ~~consumed~~ consumed by fire.

You say, Pastor, that sounds like you are trying to scare people into Christ. NO, WAY! I am not trying to scare anyone into Christ. I am trying to say that one day God, according to His Word, will bring every person into account for what we have done with the possessions and wealth and talents that He has given to us. It is then our responsibility to evaluate where we stand. Do we believe the things we own are more valuable than faith in Jesus Christ? Do we believe that "things" will bring us happiness? Are we leaving God out of our plans and then hope that some day everything will be all right? Riches produce selfishness.

Now, how do we avoid this problem of selfishness? By remembering that our wealth, our possessions, our money all comes from God. And it should be used for God's glory. By remembering that the Bible teaches that through God's poverty, we have become rich. Through Christ you can become the richest person that has ever lived upon the face of the earth.

Dear friends, do you really know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour? You say, "Well, I would like to. What must I do?"

(1) First, the Bible teaches that we must recognize that we are sinners. And that because of sin we are separated from God. We are going our own way. And God cannot meet us because we are filled with self and sin. There is a great separation between God and us.

(2) Secondly, we must believe that when Jesus died on the cross, He paid the penalty for this separation. That there will be no condemnation for those who believe that the blood of Jesus paid the penalty for sin.

(3) Then, third, the Bible teaches that we must personally invite Jesus to come into our lives. "Lord, come into my life. Be my saviour and Lord." I wonder if you will make that decision. Right now, invite Jesus into your life?

And my Christian Friends, I wonder what God will say of us as He examines what we have done with what He has given to us? How will He judge us in that day of judgment? I hope that we are trusting Him and using what He has given us for His glory. So that in the day of judgment we might hear: WELL DONE, THY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD."

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven we thank you for your Word. And Lord, we understand that it is difficult for those who live in the 20th century, here in America, where we have so much abundance, it is difficult, Father, to understand how riches can destroy us. For they are already so much a part of our lives. It is difficult to see where they can lead. Lord, we want to do your will.

And Father, I pray, for every single person who has never made that important decision of receiving Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. I pray that, today, might be the day of decision in their hearts. The day they will invite Christ to come into their hearts.

And Father, I pray that everyone of us who are Christians might lay our lives before you in complete dedication and obedience. Especially, Father, in the areas of our riches and possessions. And Father, help us to be grateful for all that you have given us.

In Jesus name, we pray....Amen.