

## **FAT CATTLE GO FIRST**

### **James 5:1-6**

I don't know *anyone* who *likes* this passage  
Reason we struggle with it: we don't understand  
what James is trying to tell us.

**Living faith => peace;**

*God's people are fighting!*

**Final solution for conflict in suffering: depend  
on the Lord.**

**NOT our plans 4:13-17 NOT our funds 5:1-6**

For suffering believers, 2 issues come together.

They plan to escape—go elsewhere to make money

We can't count on our plans.

We can't count on our funds.

***But, we can count on our Lord!***

**5:1-6** warns: don't count on funds to solve problems

Warning sounds like God is down on rich people.

Some say "God wants to make you rich."

Others: "God condemns the rich." *Neither is true!*

Bible *does* say God wants us to *prosper*.

*Doesn't use world's standard to define prosperity*

Define prosperity by money/wealth = pagan idea.

God defines prosperity by true value, worth, contentment,  
fruit of HS, peace, all we *NEED*.

***NOT*** saying God hates rich people!

Paul says God gives us “*all things richly to enjoy.*”

Problem isn't being rich.

By any objective standard, viewed through lens of history,  
or lens of rest of world, ***we're rich!***

His concern: *attitude of people who want more*

Attitude isn't limited to people who have riches.

Attitude of people who *make money god & seek it.*

People suffering notice lifestyle of the rich & powerful

We become jealous, wishing more for selves.

We think wealth can solve our problems.

He warns of danger of imitating them.

Solution *isn't* riches. ***It's trusting God.***

We must get our eyes off possessions;

fix our eyes on God & His plan for us.

Believers are struggling: can't get mind off money

Some people say, "That's not *our* problem.

Look at what we get paid!

They don't *HAVE* money. They *just WANT* it!

They think money will solve their problem.

James wants us to see danger of this philosophy.

**People living for wealth weep when judgment comes**

Introduced with lament of people who trust riches. **1**

*“Come now, you rich, weep & howl*

*for the miseries that are coming upon you.”*

2 reasons wealthy weep—God judges the rich: #1

**People who live for wealth**

**try to hoard it**

Especially in hard times—*only to watch it rot!*

**Wealth is temporary & perishable;**

it doesn't last 1-3

When we trust possessions... if disaster strikes, we lose it all! If judgment comes, wealth won't help.

3 kinds of wealth shown to be temporary:

**2-3** *“Your riches have rotted; your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold & silver have corroded...”*

**What happens when we *hoard* wealth?**

*Wealth/riches*=>**grain**—basic to agricultural society.

Problem with accumulating grain:

**Hoarded grain rots 2a**

**Full refrigerators**—moldy food in back

Problem with accumulating clothes:

**Hoarded clothes get moth-eaten 2b**

**Full closets**—invaded by moths & other critters

Problem with accumulating gold & silver

**Hoarded money corrodes 3a**

**Full safe**—*“thieves break in & steal”*

Corrosion when you pile it in corner; don't use it.

## **Wealth never produces what we're looking for!**

*It doesn't satisfy!*

Corroded stockpiles testify against people who hoard  
become basis for judgment **3b** *"Their corrosion will  
be evidence against you & will eat your flesh like fire.*

### **Hoarded wealth leads to judgment.**

People who depend on wealth hoard in hard times

People seeking "little bit more" set selves up for frustration

Condition of person in **4:1-3**

**Always seeking;**

**never get enough to satisfy thirst**

Tragic illustration: **Bertha Adams**, died alone in West Palm Beach, Easter 1976. Cause of death: malnutrition. Wasted away to 50 lb.; she could no longer stay alive. Authorities examined her house, found "biggest mess you could imagine!" She begged food from neighbors; piled up clothes from Salvation Army; appeared penniless.

Among belongings, 2 keys to safe deposit boxes, containing 700 shares of AT&T stock & \$800,000. More than \$1M stashed away! For what? Her "mess" of hoarded goods was worthless; stood as testimony to foolishness!

People who live to strike it rich:

- try to hoard it
- contaminated by it!
- watch it rot!
- judged because of it.

[2<sup>nd</sup> reason not to live for wealth: **4-6** ]

**People who live for wealth participate in judgment of the wealthy 4-6**

**Wealthy people accumulate wealth by mistreating others.**

**3 common offenses rich people commit:**

**1. Fraud: Don't pay just wages to workers 3b-4**

*"You've laid up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the wages of laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you; the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts."*

Boss enjoys benefit; beats them out of pay.

***Beats them out of what they have coming!***

God knows; will respond appropriately.

**2. Luxurious living: in self-centered pleasure 5**

*"You've lived on earth in luxury & self-indulgence. You've fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter."*

They waste what they have in personal pleasure,  
while others don't have enough

They aren't concerned about needs of others.

Their lifestyle's compared to fattening self up

**3. Murder: kill innocent people who do nothing to them 6** *"You've condemned & murdered the righteous person. He doesn't resist you."*

They kill anyone who gets in way—esp. *just* people  
 If someone takes business by treating customers fairly,  
 they disappear—esp. in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries.

People who live according to godly principles have hard  
 time in world controlled by rich & powerful.

### **Injustice of wealthy leads to judgment.**

Price of getting rich leads to judgment.

People who *seek* wealth don't understand cost

They won't be able to follow rules the rich live by,  
 without giving up biblical foundation.

So, we have to make a choice.

Are we going to capitulate, & join the enemy?

Or, are we going to hang in there, trust God;  
 let Him work out solution for affliction?

### **What is the destiny of the wealthy?**

***“Fat cattle go first!”*** 5 *“You have fattened your hearts in  
 a day of slaughter.”*

In slaughter house, fat cattle are taken first

Fattening cattle: prepares them for *slaughter*

Who do nations go after when they invade city?

"Fattening them up" serves as part of God's judgment

Getting fatter leads to judgment

***-NOT escape from hard times!***

We join enemy, seeking same goals=>we join in judgment

*So what's the point?*

**If we try to play game of the rich & powerful...**

**=> we have to play by their rules**

**=> we'll share in their destiny!**

**People who pursue riches**

**pursue destiny of the rich!**

**Better to abandon this pursuit**

**& seek God!**

**Wealth won't get what we're looking for.**

**Wealth won't get us through hard times.**

We must depend on God—NOT our funds.

Bank accts & CDs won't get us through hard times

–not stocks, bonds & mutual funds,

–not IRAs & 401Ks.

–not education

–not prestigious job & big salary

–not empire we build.

Those can be gone in a heartbeat!

If that's what we're living for...

If that's what we're depending on...

**it can all be gone overnight—one tornado!**

**Don't think we're exempt!**

**Our hope is in *the Lord***

**–NOT in goods we accumulate.**

***What are WE trusting in?***

For salvation? For survival tomorrow?