

## James Part 12

Greed / Indulgence

*James 5:1-6*

*Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 6:10*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

The book of James has been a huge reminder to us that the faith we have in God will be seen in the way we live our lives. A true faith will display righteous works. A false faith will be exhibited in disobedient rebellion. Make no mistake about it, if you are truly in Christ, your faith will be challenged daily. Everyday will be a battle of whether to work for Christ or not.

You will be challenged to give up when you face various trials. You will be challenged to give in when you face many temptations. You will be challenged to be hearers only. You will be challenged to show partiality and discrimination towards others. You will be challenged to curse them with your words. You will be challenged to be arrogant and self focused. You will be challenged to fight and quarrel. You will be challenged to commit spiritual adultery with every kind of idol. You will be challenged to unfairly judge. And at every turn you will be challenged to try to hold on to control of your life.

As we saw last week, trying to hold on to control of our lives will leave us with a wasted, and disappointed life. In ignoring God's will for our lives, we wreck our lives. So, unlike those who James is addressing, we must concede control of our lives over to God. And what exactly were these people trying to control? Look at **James 4:13**, where we were last week. What were they trying to control? Their riches. And of course, I want to set the record straight right here at the start. There is nothing inherently evil about being wealthy or well off. There's nothing wrong with having worked your whole life to finally afford a nice home and a fishing boat. James is not rebuking those who have riches.

Rather this morning, the rebuke is for those who have a love for money. A key verse for us is **1 Timothy 6:10**; "for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith..." As you can see... the love of money, not money itself is the root of all kinds of evils and causes people to wander away from their faith. If faith works, it must reject a love for money, and what do we call a love for money? Greed! This morning we are going to see that we must concede control of money and we must resist a love for money. In other words we must not be greedy and we must not indulge in our riches.

So go ahead and turn with me to **James 5:1-6** and let's read

together. Look again at **verse 5**. Do you understand the illustration here? It's pretty simple, but let me make it more clear for you; the more a calf eats and eats and gets fat... it doesn't realize that all it's doing is making itself all the more ready to be killed and eaten. Or.... it's like this; the more I indulge on **Krispy Kreme** doughnuts... the more I fatten myself up... the sicker and more unhealthy I become... eventually I will die. I'm fattening myself up to my own demise. The more I indulge in doughnuts the more I kill my body. But the more we indulge in our **riches**, the more we kill our souls. The bottom line is this... "**like a calf fattened for slaughter, when we indulge in our riches we butcher our soul.**" This morning we are going to see 3 ways we can combat greed and indulgence.

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first is.... **We Combat Greed By Storing Up Treasures In Heaven**. Look again at **vs. 2-3**. This sounds very similar to **Matthew 6:19-21**. The point is simple, don't store up treasures on Earth. Why? Because all of the treasures of this earth will rust, or they will rot, or they will corrode, or they will break, or they will get lost, or they will be stolen. Earthly treasures do not last... period! **Proverbs 28:22** tells us that all earthly wealth will in the end become poverty. So we shouldn't store up treasures on Earth, and we most certainly shouldn't store the up in the last days. Why? Because Jesus is coming back soon... and he doesn't care how much money you have or what you've accumulated. At the moment when Jesus returns or we pass away and meet him face to face, all of your riches will mean nothing. Jesus doesn't give one iota how rich you are. Think about it... how much does gold mean to Jesus? He paves his streets with it!

Rather, store up treasures in Heaven. What treasures will make it to Heaven, what treasures will last? Think about it. There's really only two that I can think of; people who know God & our relationship with God. So we can either accumulate wealth which will corrode, or we can reach people for Christ. We can build bigger buildings, we can buy more land... but in the end the only thing that will last is our worship for God and our relationship with the Body of Christ; in essence the Church. This is why the Church should be so important... it is really the only investment that will never depreciate. This is why reaching others with the Gospel is of paramount importance. Don't spend your life trying to get bigger houses and nicer cars... when you haven't disciplined your children or shared the Gospel with your neighbors. **Why waste your life building castles made of sand, when you can build the kingdom of God which cannot be destroyed.** In the end it's not about the money you make, but the people you take. What good is it to get rich, gain the world, and lose your family, and your soul. **Like a calf fattened for slaughter, when we indulge in our riches we butcher our soul.**

Secondly... **We Combat Greed By Finding Contentment In Christ.** **Matthew 6:24** makes it clear; we cannot serve both God and money. We either find satisfaction in our riches or we find it in Christ. Look at **vs. 5**. We've tried to find satisfaction in our possessions and our wealth. We've indulged in riches. But where has that gotten us? No where. What we've found is what we see in **Ecclesiastes 5:10** we will never be satisfied in riches.

Listen, being rich is not a sin, but indulging in riches is; because we were not made to hoard our wealth. We've said this time and time again; we are blessed to be a blessing, we are conduits of God's blessings so that others are blessed, we get only so we can give. We were never given this wealth to hold onto for ourselves, we were given it to show the love of Christ to those in need. Look at **Hebrews 13:16**, and **Acts 20:35**. We cannot hold onto our wealth because it's simply not ours to keep. As **Deuteronomy 16:17** puts it, it's a sin to hoard our wealth.

So, instead of indulging in our riches and hoarding them for ourselves, which never really brings us joy anyway, we should find satisfaction in Christ. Contentment in Christ is the key. Look at **Matthew 6:33**. If we seek his kingdom first, everything else will be added. When we put Jesus first in our lives, we find true satisfaction on earth. **The key to true contentment is seeking Jesus first.**

We will always find more satisfaction in giving than we do in indulging. Look at **Luke 6:38** where we are told that if we give, God will give to us until it runs over. We will be so satisfied that our blessings will literally pour out beyond our capability to hold them. We will be fully satisfied. Look at **2 Corinthians 9:6** when we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully. By giving we find full contentment in life. We see this in **Proverbs 28:27**. Whoever gives will not ever be in want.

We think a lot about how to get more... but have you ever thought much about how to give more? Here's some tips on how to give on the regular. Budget an amount to help people randomly. I always try to have cash in my wallet or money on my card that I've already surrendered to God. When someone is in need of gas, food, or whatever, I'm ready to help. Another way is to find a missionary or christian cause you can support as a family monthly. My family supports a Compassion child named Merlyn in Indonesia every month, and we support a missionary family every month. We do it as a family because it's part of what we believe it means to worship as a family. And, of course another way is to commit to tithing. Tithing literally means 10 percent, but is most commonly used as a phrase that means giving to the local church. If you are new to the church world, or have never tithed before, you don't need to start at 10%. Instead start at 2% or 5% and work your way up to 10% or more. And remember this... we aren't after your money. Of course we couldn't do ministry without it, but we believe God will supply our every

need. No, tithing is God's way of letting you give back to his work. Tithing is worship.

Regardless of how you give... the point is this, hold loosely to your riches for the sake of others. If we hold onto what God has told us to get rid of we are simply fattening our souls up for slaughter. **Like a calf fattened for slaughter, when we indulge in our riches we butcher our soul.**

Lastly this morning, **We Combat Greed By Repenting Of Our Corruption.** As we've seen time and time again in the book of James, a proper response to our sinfulness is repentance. Go back if you will to **James 4:8-10**. Repentance isn't simply saying that you're sorry or admitting that you were wrong. Repentance is a complete brokenness over sin, a brokenness which causes us to regret, run from and atone for our disobedience to our Lord. Look again at **vs.1**. Here we are called to weep and howl in repentance over our spiritual sickness caused by a love for riches.

You see, Greed corrupts us spiritually. It causes misery. In **verse 3** it eats our flesh like fire. Meaning, it corrupts our hearts. Like burnt toast is a corruption of bread – our souls become blackened by greed. In my research for this message I came across an article on lifehack.org. The article named, 15 ways the rich think differently, concludes with this; “the rich think about themselves first, and are constantly thinking about how to get more rich.” Even the world gets it; those who love riches are selfish and those who love riches are consumed with being more rich. They are corroded because they have exchanged living life for pursuing more money. **Luke 12:15** makes it clear that one's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions. Life is way more than being rich. And so, we need to repent for selfishly pursuing our own riches. We need to repent for making wealth a god. **Psalms 10:3** reminds us of the danger of rejecting God for greed. It's a spiritual sickness and the cure is repentance.

But, Greed doesn't just corrupt us spiritually, it also corrupts us physically. Look at **vs.4**. You see, it causes us to rob people of what they are owed. **Often it seems, the more we have the less we want to give.** You can't have my doughnuts. This is why bosses pay low wages, give poor benefits, hire immigrant workers, and use sweat shops in China. This is why corporations like Nike with all their money have their factories in China; it's not enough to sell 20 dollar shoes for 200 dollars when you can also use Uighur slaves to make those shoes for next to nothing.

You see, greed causes us to move the ethical needle to the breaking point. Look at **vs.6**. **Greed makes us do things we never thought we would ever do.** It most definitely leads us to destroyed relationships when we condemn each other over money... but could it actually lead us to murder? **Psalms 62:10** reminds us that a love for money leads to extortion and robbery. **1 Timothy 6:9** tells us that the desire to be rich plunges people into

temptations, snares, sinful desires, and eventually destruction. Think of the Enron scandal or Bernie Madoff. Some of the richest people in the world will do anything to become richer. Enron was at one point a 75 billion dollar company. It no longer exists. Bernie Madoff, one of the richest men to ever live is now serving a 150 year sentence. It didn't matter how much they had... they just wanted more, and they were willing to do whatever it took to get it. Are we all that different?

We must repent of how we've physically sinned against others because of our Greed. Who have we stolen from? Who have we cheated out of something they've earned? Who have we scammed for a few extra coins? We must repent of our greed and our indulgence and ask God to cleanse us and make us new. Otherwise we will be destroyed. **Like a calf fattened for slaughter, when we indulge in our riches we butcher our soul.**

### Application

It's simple... the one thing we run after the most; riches, is the one thing that, by pursuing, will bring us the least satisfaction. The more we pursue wealth, the more we indulge in money, the more we kill our soul. We cannot serve both God and money. We will love the one and hate the other. The more we love money, the more we hate Christ. And, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. Satan is no fool. He knows that the more he can get you to chase riches, the more he can corrupt your testimony for Christ and crush your love for Christ.

So what do we do? We stop believing the lie that more money will make us happier. We store our riches in heaven by reaching people and worshipping God. We give our money away to bless those in need. We repent of our greed and selfish indulgence and the way we've treated people in order to get more money. We exchange the cash for Christ.

### Conclusion

You may not know this about me. I feel every week I reveal to you some new corner of my soul, so why should this week be any different? I like rap music. I actually like a lot of different genres of music, but one of my favorites is rap. And I know what you are going to say... rap isn't music. Well, we'll just have to disagree. And, one of my favorite rappers is a pastor who goes by the rap name Trip Lee. And years ago he had a song called Cash or Christ. And I want to end today by reading you some of the lyrics....

Most are concerned with the cheddar flow, but dawg I gotta let em know  
A lot of reasons we should be seeking Jesus instead of dough  
Instead of mo material things, the jewelry and fame  
I speak of the King, but most ain't feeling me mayne

They would rather let they money stack, tryna get a hundred stack  
They pockets fat, but they not ready when Christ is coming back  
If they only knew the real truth about the coming wrath,  
They would probably race to Him faster than a running back

I know the things the cheddar buys, will attract and catch the eyes  
Instead of ice, it'd be nice if we would invest in life  
Instead of all that flashy stuff, tryna get our status up  
His wrath is just so if we don't seek Him dawg, we outta luck  
What good is it to gain the world, in the end lose your soul  
It's foolish bro, there's a loving savior you can truly know  
I know you're seeking satisfaction you can't find it though  
Tryna dash for the cash and designer clothes

Allow me to encourage you, if you agree the Word is true  
You can only serve one Master some of us is serving two  
Can't serve God and cash, can't love the world and Christ  
Put money out ya mind, focus on eternal life  
Can't speak from experience, I ain't seen it but I'm betting  
Treasures of this world ain't nothing next to the ones that's up in Heaven