


# JAMES 5

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## The Filthy Rich

James 5:1-6

A close-up, black and white portrait of Michael Douglas as Gordon Gekko. He is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He has a serious, intense expression, looking slightly off-camera to the left. His hair is dark and slightly messy.

AN OLIVER STONE FILM

# WALL STREET

**"GREED  
IS GOOD."**

— Gordon Gekko

LeBron James' contract:

4 seasons = \$154,000,000

1 season = \$38,500,000

1 game = \$469,512

1 quarter = \$117,378

1 minute = \$9,781

1 second = \$163





UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN GOD

WE TRUST



THE WHITE HOUSE

TWENTY DOLLARS



Turn in Your Bibles to

JAMES 5

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**To Whom is James Speaking?**





## James' Readers

15 times in this letter,  
James addresses his  
readers as “brethren”  
(3 times as “beloved  
brethren”).

That is **NOT** the Case Here

Ἄγε νῦν οἱ πλούσιοι  
(“Come now you rich”)

Are these “rich” even believers?



# Not the 1<sup>st</sup> Time...

- **1:10-11** – “and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”
- **2:6b-7** – “Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?”

**NO SERIOUSLY**

**TELL US HOW YOU REALLY  
FEEL**



# We Have All Heard:

- 1 Timothy 6:10 –

“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 griefs.”

# And We Have Been Warned:

- 2 Timothy 3:1-5 –

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, **lovers of money**, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.”



# James Sounds More Like Amos

**4:1** Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!” **2** The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, “Behold, the days are coming upon you When they will take you away with meat hooks, And the last of you with fish hooks.

# 1. The Miseries of the Rich

- 5:1 – Wealth Brings

**CONSTERNATION**



## James 5:1

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl  
for your miseries which are coming  
upon you.”

“Come now” – meant to be  
confrontational (as in 4:13).

Why is James so angry?

# Look Back at James 2:1-7













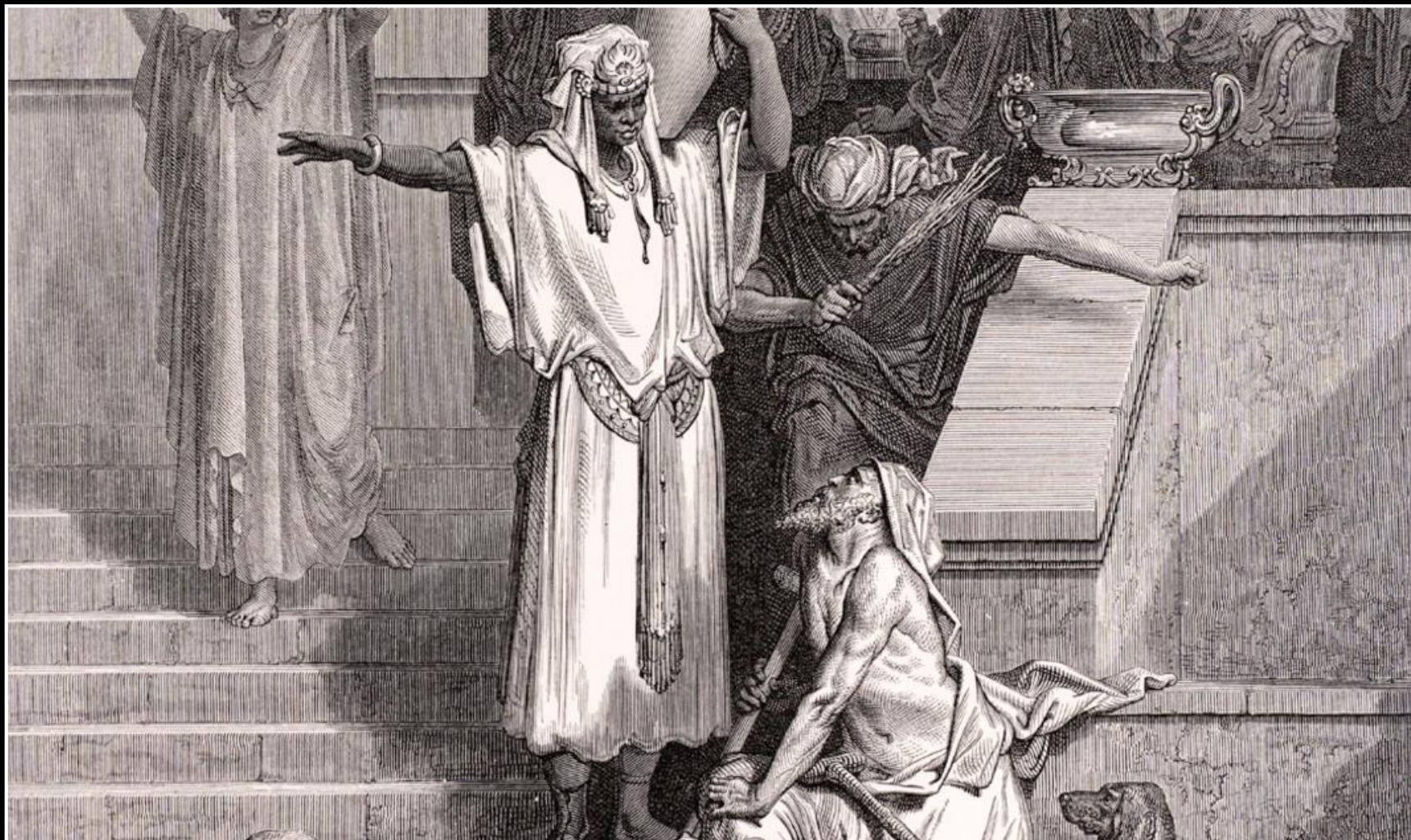
## Luke 6:24

**24** But woe to you  
who are rich, for you  
are receiving your  
comfort in full.

## Matthew 19:23-24

**23** And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. **24** Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”





Luke 16:19-31

**“weep and howl”**

Why does James say this?

**Because it is the appropriate response  
for sinners who have hear a prophetic  
word of judgment.**

The repentant weep now; the  
unrepentant will weep even more  
intensely later.



Turn to  
2 Corinthians 7:8-11a



**Our Response  
to Our Own  
Sin**

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**Is the Greatest  
Spiritual  
Barometer we  
Possess.**



## James 5:2-3

**2** Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

**3** 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!

# 1. The Miseries of the Rich

- 5:1 – Wealth Brings

**CONSTERNATION**

- 5:2-3 – Wealth Ends Up In

**CORROSION**



# 3 Main Sources of Wealth

## 1. Crops and Grain

- This wealth becomes rotten.

## 2. Garments

- This wealth is moth-eaten.

## 3. Gold and Silver

- This wealth will rust.
- What's wrong with this example?

## Notice:

“Your riches *have* rotted”

“your garments *have* become  
moth-eaten”

“Your gold and your silver  
*have* rusted”



## Jesus in Luke 12:33-34

**33** “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## **“Rust” Personified**

**“their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire.”**

**And furthermore:**

**“It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”**



Turn to  
Luke 17:26-30





## James 5:4

**4** 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 Sabaoth.



# “Behold”

**Another strong imperative  
 (“Look!”)**

James now presents his evidence  
against the guilty parties.



# “Wages” Personified

“the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you”

In James’ day, many of the field workers were transients (much like today, actually), and they often were in need of special compassion because of their foreign status.

# The Law: Leviticus 19:13

“You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.”

19:33 goes on to say, “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.”



# The Rich “withheld”

- The Greek is *apostereō*, which means “to defraud, rob, despoil”
- This is not a simple misunderstanding; this is robbery.
- The workers very survival depends on their earned wages, and these rich have stolen their livelihood.

## Malachi 3:5

“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and **against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages**, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts.



# Business is About to Pick Up!

“the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

How serious is this?

Does this verse remind you of any in the OT?





# Exodus 2:23

“Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and **their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.**”





What was the  
result in both of  
these OT  
narratives?



# The Lord Has Heard

And notice: “Lord of Sabaoth”



# “Lord of Armies”

In the OT: Yahweh Sabaoth

When this title is used of the Lord, it points to His ability and intention to deliver His people.

When James invokes this name of the Lord, he emphasizes the seriousness of the matter and the hopelessness of those who stand opposed to God.



## James 5:5

**5** You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

**“LET THEM  
EAT CAKE”**





Unjust Action is One Thing...

But this is a heart issue.

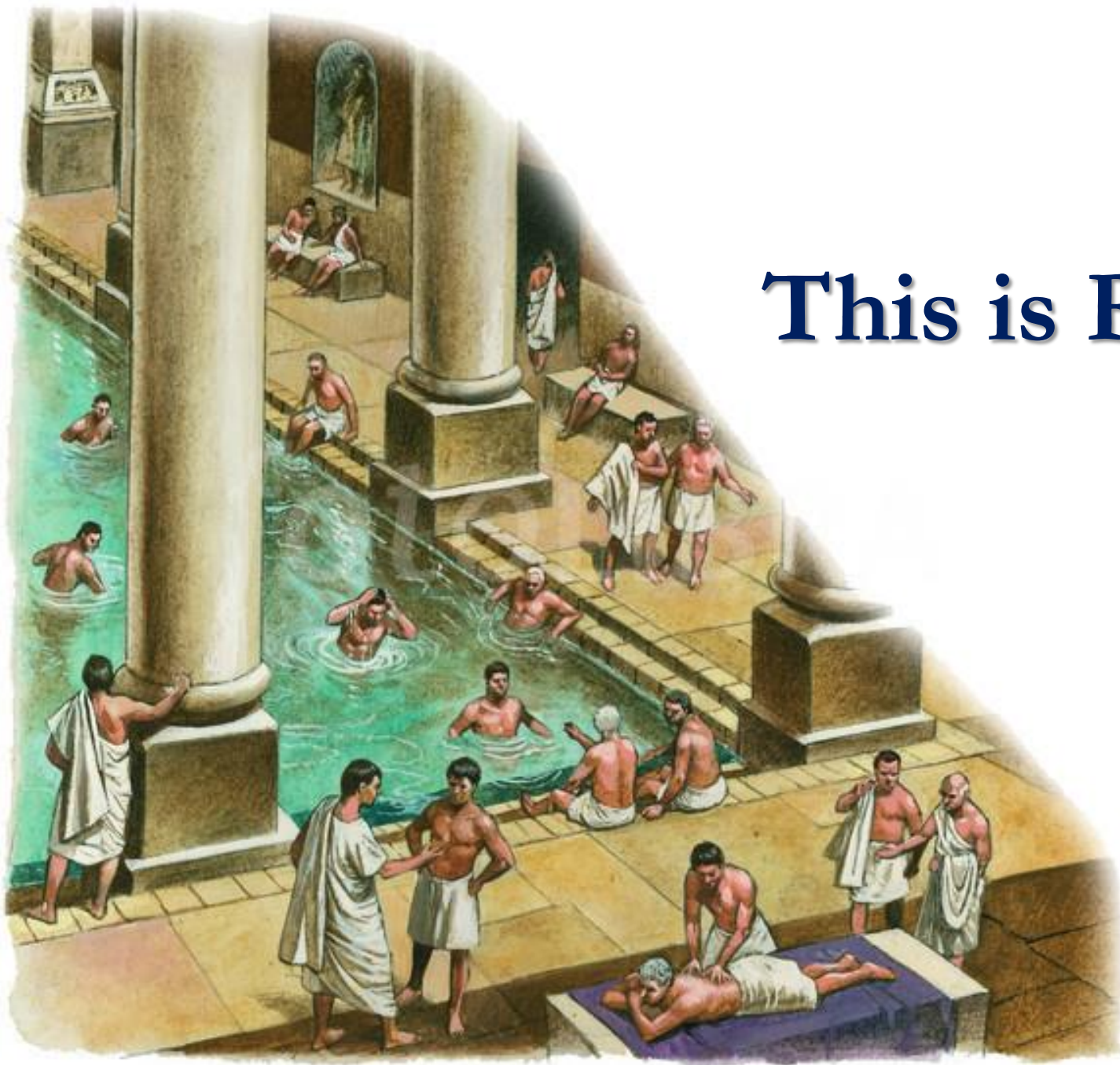
This is self-centered.

This is offensive to God.

This is worldly.

This is pagan.

**This is Roman.**





And This  
is America.

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# And It Is Self-Inflicted

“you have fattened your hearts in a day  
of slaughter”

**The point: Slaughter is coming.**

Instead of fattening an animal for  
sacrifice, the rich have fattened  
themselves for their own destruction.



## James 5:6

**6** You have  
condemned and put  
to death the  
righteous man; he  
does not resist you.

## In Matthew 12:7

- Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 –

“But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”

By their own condemning words the rich were voicing their own condemnation.



## 2. The Miseries of the Innocent

- 5:4-6 – Wealth Results In

**CONDEMNATION**

# And Furthermore

These men have “put to death the righteous man.”

I think James is speaking literally.

It is not hard to imagine that someone living day to day is at risk of death if they are not paid their wages.



## Sirach 34:21-22

“Bread is life to the destitute,  
and to deprive them of it is  
murder. To rob your neighbor of  
his livelihood is to kill him, and  
he who defrauds a worker of his  
wages sheds blood.”

Many of Us Might Say:

“I’m not rich,  
so James isn’t  
talking to me.”



# James' Thought Process

It begins with idolatry,  
Which leads to mercilessness,  
And results in murder,  
And they know what they are doing (4:17).

- God's Response:

He “is opposed to the proud” (4:6), and “judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy” (2:13).

God destroys the destroyers of His people.

Let Us *Never*

Become Detached  
From The  
Implications Of  
The Gospel.



## Proverbs 30:8-9

**7** Two things I asked of You, Do not refuse me before I die: **8** Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, **9** That I not be full and deny You and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God.

