

UNJUST RICH WITHOUT EMPATHY

JAMES 5:1-6

How did you see God working in your life this week? (Romans 1:11, 12)

BACKGROUND: To continue one of the themes in James, the “Royal Law” (fn 3:8), James shows us the most flagrant of its violations which stems from a lack of empathy.

YOU LOSE. The unjust rich person has no accountability to God or dependence upon His grace. This self-made person invests his treasures on a pampered life style. He doesn't understand that not everyone is like him, and he would rather his wealth rot than share it with the poor. This attitude heaps up the condemnation of God's judgment. (**James 5:1-3, fn 5:1-6, Matthew 6:19-21, fn 6:20, fn 6:21, Psalm 49:10-14, fn 49:10-14, Matthew 16:24-27, fn 16:26, fn 16:27**) *How could you invest in your heavenly reward?*

YOU EXPLOIT THOSE THAT HELP YOU. It is sin to get rich by taking advantage of people. Using the courts to outsmart poor, ignorant people or by using a wealthy position to leverage investors—your neighbors—is to miss God's love for all people and His righteous plan for your life. (**James 5:4, 5, Deuteronomy 24:10-22, fn 24:10-22, Jeremiah 22:13-17, 21, fn 22:15, 16, fn 22:21, I Timothy 6:3-10, fn 6:6-10, Romans 13:8-10, fn 13:9, fn 13:10, II Corinthians 5:9, 10, fn 5:9, 10, John 10:10, fn 10:10**) *When wealth is used by a believer to exploit people, what is missing?*

YOU MURDER. “James is referring to *judicial* ‘murder’—primarily referring to taking away the means of making a living. The landed gentry (the rich) controlled the courts. The poor could not oppose them because they had no way to use the system, and thus were helpless.” R. Kent Hughes, *James: Faith That Works*, p. 218. Without empathy, the attitude of the rich person was that he was entitled to be rich. Therefore, he reasoned that he was more important and more valuable than the lowly poor. Our Lord owns the souls of the rich and the poor and each will give an account on judgment day of how he treated his neighbor. (**James 5:6, fn 5:6, Luke 16:19-31, fn 16:19-31, James 4:10, fn 4:10, Luke 9:23-25, fn 9:24-25, Revelation 20:11-15, fn 20:12-15**) *How can seeking wealth be hazardous to your relationship with the Lord?*

Check up—How is your relationship with your neighbor, your spouse, and your Lord? Do your actions show that you are being led by the Holy Spirit?

