

(NKJV) James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [lit: *hosts*] 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment. 13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. 19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:1 Come now, **you rich** [lit. “the rich”], weep and howl for **your** miseries that are coming upon **you!** 2 **Your** riches are corrupted, and **your** garments are moth-eaten. 3 **Your** gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against **you** and will eat **your** flesh like fire. **You** have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed **your** fields, which **you** kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [lit: *hosts*] 5 **You** have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; **you** have fattened **your** hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 **You** have condemned, **you** have murdered the just; he does not resist **you**.

Previous reference to “the rich” in James:

1:9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but **the rich** in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field **he** will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So **the rich man** also will fade away in **his** pursuits.

2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not **the rich** oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do **they** not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

Q1: Who is the “you” of “you rich” [lit. “the rich”] in James 5:1?

The General Epistle of James has been described as the “Proverbs of the NT” because of its primary and pithy focus on matters of our practical Spiritual walk.

Compare James 5:1-6 re “the rich” with the OT Book of Proverbs which contrasts “the wise” with “the fool” as given in the verses on the next page.

Book of Proverbs

1:7 **The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* FOOLS despise wisdom and instruction.**

1:22 “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?
For scorners delight in their scorning,
And **FOOLS hate knowledge.**

10:23 **To do evil *is* like sport to a FOOL,**
But a man of understanding has wisdom.

12:15 **The way of a FOOL *is* right in his own eyes,**
But he who heeds counsel *is* wise.

13:19 A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul,
But *it is* an abomination to FOOLS to depart from evil.

14:1 The wise woman builds her house,
But the FOOLish pulls it down with her hands.

14:3 **In the mouth of a FOOL *is* a rod of pride,**
But the lips of the wise will preserve them.

14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,
But the folly of FOOLS *is* deceit.

14:9 **FOOLS mock at sin,**
But among the upright *there is* favor.

14:16 A wise *man* fears and departs from evil,
But a FOOL rages and is self-confident.

15:5 **A FOOL despises his father’s instruction,**
But he who receives correction is prudent.

15:14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of FOOLS feeds on FOOLishness.

17:16 Why *is there* in the hand of a FOOL the purchase price of **wisdom,**
Since *he has* no heart *for it*?

17:24 Wisdom *is* in the sight of him who has understanding,
But the eyes of a FOOL are on the ends of the earth.

18:2 **A FOOL has no delight in understanding,**
But in expressing his own heart.

23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a FOOL,
For **he will despise the wisdom of your words.**

26:12 **Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?**
***There is* more hope for a FOOL than for him.**

28:26 **He who trusts in his own heart is a FOOL,**
But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.

29:20 **Do you see a man hasty in his words?**
***There is* more hope for a FOOL than for him.**

Who are these **categories** of wise and fool?

1. High (contrasted with low) IQ's, test scores, reading ability, etc?
2. Intelligent / insightful life choices to stay in school, learn a skill for work, delay marriage and children until financial self-sufficiency, avoid drugs and alcohol, etc., contrasted with individuals who do the opposite of all such?
3. Or, is the contrast of wise and fool about the much deeper issue of ultimate reality / existence? If so, what exactly is the folly of the fool?
4. Do we all by nature belong to this very same category of "fool?" If so, why is such realization important?

Now, consider NT references to "rich" in the context of personal prosperity:

Matthew 27:57 [re the burial of LJC]

⁵⁷ Now when evening had come, there came a **rich man** from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

Luke 12:16 [re the rich man's new, big barns]

¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a **certain rich man** yielded plentifully.

Luke 16:19 [re contrast with poor Lazarus]

¹⁹ "There was a **certain rich man** who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

Luke 18:23 [re the rich young ruler]

²³ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for **he was very rich**.

Luke 19:2

² Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and **he was rich**.

Luke 21:1 [re the widow's mite]

²¹ And He looked up and saw **the rich** putting their gifts into the treasury,

2 Corinthians 8:9

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was **rich**, yet for your sakes He became poor, that **you** through His poverty **might become rich**.

Rev. 2:9 [re Smyrna] ⁹ "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are **rich**); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are a* synagogue of Satan.

Rev. 3:17 [re Laodicea] ¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am **rich**, have become **wealthy**, and **have need of nothing**'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked

What then might the category “you rich” (or “the rich”) be?

1. Those having earned (deservedly obtained) great material prosperity?
2. Those having earned (deservedly obtained) great moral prosperity?
3. Those having earned (deservedly obtained) great spiritual prosperity?

What are (at least) three essential attributes of (the category) “the rich” that makes it / them the deserved object of God’s wrath as given here in this passage of James?

Hint 1: There are many Biblical persons who were economically prosperous: Job, Abraham, Moses (at 40 years old), David, Solomon, Ananias & Saphira, Priscilla & Aquilla, Onesiphorus.

Hint 2: The Lord severely condemned the religious leaders of Jerusalem: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matt 23:13ff)

Hint 3: Proverbs use of the simile “strong city” (i.e. walled protection)

10:15 **The rich man’s** wealth is his strong city;

The destruction of the poor is their poverty.

18:11 **The rich man’s** wealth is his strong city,

And like a high wall in his own esteem.

Hint 4: Being greatly gifted can become a fatal flaw: Samson, Saul, Solomon, David, Absalom (and why Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh,” 2 Cor. 12:7). Consider the general principle of Jeremiah 9

23 Thus says the Lord:

“Let not **the wise man** glory in his wisdom,

Let not **the mighty man** glory in his might,

Nor let **the rich man** glory in his riches;

24 But let him who glories glory in this,

That he understands and knows Me,

That I am the Lord, exercising

lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight,” says the Lord.

1.

2.

3.

5:7 Therefore be patient, **brethren**, until the coming of the Lord. See how *the farmer* waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 **You** also be patient. Establish **your** hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, **brethren**, lest **you** be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My **brethren**, take *the prophets*, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. **You** have heard of the perseverance of **Job** and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

What does “at hand” meaning in reference to the Lord and the exhortation for us to wait patiently?

1. Does “at hand” mean that the Lord is close to us, as in the sense of His accessibility to our prayer? If so, is this consistent with the idea of patience?
2. Does “at hand” mean that the Lord’s return is immanent, as in the sense that the time of anyone’s life is exceedingly short, so whatever the injustice associated with “the rich” it won’t last long for any member of that category?
3. Does “at hand” mean that the Lord’s return is immanent in that Christ physically / visibly returns to Space-Time (i.e., the Second Coming)? If so, how do we reconcile that some 2,000 years have passed since the writing of James and still no Second Coming?

Given the time delay inherent with the phrase “at hand,” how is the core idea of our “faith” related to the need for “patience” (vs. 7, 8, 10), being “established” in our heart (v. 8), not “grumbling” (vs. 9), enduring “suffering” (vs. 10), exhibiting “endurance” and “perseverance” (vs. 11)? [Think of Israel’s words—such as at Kibroth Hattaavah {Num. 11:34}, literally “graves of craving”—during the 40 years of their wilderness wandering between the time of the Exodus and crossing the Jordan River to enter The Promised Land].

Insight: Search on: *Euler’s Theory of Buckling*, regarding the only form of structural failure, and in particular the abrupt / catastrophic failure, unrelated to the strength of that material.

James 5:12 But above all, my brethren,
do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath.
But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,”
lest you fall into judgment.

- 13 Is anyone among you suffering?

Let him pray.

- Is anyone cheerful?

Let him sing psalms.

- 14 Is anyone among you sick [G770: without strength]?

Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them **pray** over him,
anointing him with oil [G1637] in the name of the Lord. 15 And the
prayer of faith will save the sick [G2577: weary, spent, collapsed], and the
Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be
forgiven.

16 **Confess** [G1843: say the same thing, agree] your trespasses to
one another, and **pray** for one another, that you may be healed.
The effective, fervent **prayer** of a righteous man avails much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he **prayed**
earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land
for three years and six months. 18 And he **prayed** again, and the
heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth,
and someone **turns him back**, 20 let him know
that he **who turns a sinner** from the error of his way
will save a soul from death
and cover a multitude of sins.

Note
the calls
to action.

Practical Application (what am I now led to do?)
& **Experience** (what inner experience will occur?)

1. Prosperity, Riches (mine and that of others)
2. Vows (my guarantees of future behavior)

3. **Weaknesses, Exhaustion**

Read a book by Richard Sibbes 1577-1635, *The Bruised Reed* {Matt 12, Isaiah 42 & 43} “As Luther said, “Satan hates the use of pens,” and never were pens more powerfully wielded in the cause of God than by the Puritan divines of the seventeenth century. Nor have their books outlived their usefulness. Although the original volumes are worn with age, the truths found in them are as fresh as the new formats in which they are now appearing. There is no better introduction to the Puritans than the writings of Richard Sibbes, who is, in many ways, a typical Puritan. “Sibbes never wastes the student’s time,” wrote C. H. Spurgeon, “he scatters pearls and diamonds with both hands.” . . . Since its first publication in 1630, *The Bruised Reed* has been remarkably fruitful as a source of spiritual help and comfort. Richard Baxter records: “A poor peddler came to the door . . . and my father bought from him Sibb’s Bruised Reed . . . It suited my state . . . and gave me a livelier apprehension of the mystery of redemption and how much I was beholden to Jesus Christ . . . God was pleased to resolve me to himself without any means but books.” Such testimonies could be multiplied. Speaking of the preacher’s need to suit his reading to the varying conditions he finds within, Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones says in his *Preaching and Preachers*:

You will find, I think, in general that the Puritans are almost invariably helpful . . . I shall never cease to be grateful to one of them called Richard **Sibbes who was balm to my soul at a period in my life when I was overworked and badly overtired, and therefore subject in an unusual manner to the onslaughts of the devil.** In that state and condition . . . **what you need is some gentle, tender treatment for your soul.** I found at that time that Richard Sibbes, who was known in London in the early seventeenth century as “the heavenly Doctor Sibbes”, was an unfailing remedy. His books **The Bruised Reed and The Soul’s Conflict quietened, soothed, comforted, encouraged and healed me.**”

<http://www.onthewing.org/user/Sibbes%20-%20Bruised%20Reed%20-%20Updated.pdf>

4. Prayer, communal and intercessory; saying the same things about my error
5. _____