

What do you think of Rolex? Recently, my impression of this company has changed drastically.

The Hans Wilsdorf Foundation is a private Swiss foundation...It is the sole owner of the watchmaking group Rolex. The foundation supports social institutions and provides financial assistance to individuals in need through social services. It awards scholarships and funds measures to facilitate access to or return to employment. It subsidizes institutions in the fields of music, theater, and visual arts. It also supports animal protection projects worldwide. The foundation was established on 1 August 1945 by Hans Wilsdorf (president and founder of Rolex), following the death of his wife in 1944. As confirmed by his will in 1960, he bequeathed all his shares to the foundation to ensure that the company *Montres Rolex SA* would outlive him. [READ MORE](#)

Proposition

We are talking about money which can be intense, even invasive! Scripture provides a powerful **lens** through which we can view this subject. The key word is “steward” (οικονομοις; “estate manager” or “treasurer”). In [1 Corinthians 4:1-5](#) the main responsibility of a steward is **faithfulness**. The steward does not own his master’s riches. He is given the privilege and responsibility to manage the wealth of his master. That is how we must view whatever God has entrusted to us materially, or in any other realm.

We are continuing our sermon series “**Navigating Faith: A journey through the book of James**”. First, I need to note a correction! Previously I noted Chuck Swindoll’s summary of the chapters of James:

Chpt 1 - genuine stability

Chpt 2 - genuine love

Chpt 3 & 4 - genuine humility

Last Sunday we saw that genuine humility counters our tendency to presumption. We need to be willing to declare about the dreams of our lives: “*if it is the Lord’s will,*” as we read in James 4:15. Living with a simple “if only” or deeper presumption on the future or our capacity does not honor God. Henry Ward Beecher put it quite bluntly, “*We steal if we touch tomorrow. It is God’s.*”

Today we begin **Chapter 5** which speaks to us of **genuine patience** (another correction to the outline from last Sunday). The first part of this chapter addresses “**The Challenge of Riches**”. Let’s read [James 5:1-6](#). Consider **three cautions** for Christians when it comes to wealth of any amount. An **interjection** in verse 1 – “now listen” (Αγε νυν; same in 4:13; similar to 2:5) – signals a strong and urgent warning.

[1] Riches are corroding – vv. 1-3

Corrosion is the chemical deterioration of metal. This is one of three descriptions James attributed to the wealth of his readers. He did not rebuke them for **having** wealth but for **hoarding** it. Tragically, they were clinging to rotting riches, moth-eaten garments, and rusting gold/silver. The tragedy was the selfishness with which these wealthy Christians clung to material items that were fleeting in nature – “*You have hoarded wealth in the last days.*” (v.3b). We all know how our values can be turned upside down!

William Temple “*compared our culture to a shop window in which the price tags have all been muddled up and switched around – so that things of immense value are labelled as cheap, and worthless stuff is dols for a fortune.*” (**Not Old, Not Young, Not Done**, Christopher Ash, Good Book Co., 2025, 165)

James is both specific and general about riches in our passage. There is a **specific** way in which his rebuke was pointed directly at certain wealthy Christians – “*you rich people, weep and wail*” (v.1). But his rebuke is also **general**. The sorrows of riches can befall anyone. Notice three reasons for this.

- **Disappoint** – it is the essence of riches that they are fleeting and thus will fail to fulfill us (v.2)
- **Destabilize** – because riches disappoint, they testify against our faith and shake our core values (v.3a)
- **Dead-end** – as a counter-Christian value, riches are but a dead end and limited to this earth (v.3b)

[2] Riches are corrupting – v. 4

Wealth can corrupt. It is not always true, but in this case, James was specific. He identified that corruption had taken hold of some Christians. They exploited their field workers. They did not pay those who “reap-mowed” and “reap-harvested”. This results in two unfortunate consequences for the wealthy.

- **The outcry of the exploited is a condemnation of the wealthy – v. 4a**
- **The outcry of the exploited is heard and heeded by God – v. 4b** see [Exodus 3:7-8](#)

You may not be an employer. However, we still need to heed these cautions. In what way does money or other means cause you to take advantage of discount the needs of other people in your life?

[3] Riches are consuming – vv. 5-6

Are you consumed with money? You might argue that you certainly are not, because you do not have enough financial resources with which to be consumed! Yet the reality is that we can be consumed with money whether we have much of it or not. Notice in these verses two indictments and one consequence.

- **Self-indulgent** – they lived “luxuriously” (lit. “daintily”) and for “wanton pleasure” (lit. “riotously”) – v.5a
- **Self-absorbed** – in effect, they “condemned” and (lit.) “murdered” the innocent (“righteous”) – v.6
- **Self-condemned** – as a consequence, they “fattened” (lit. “nurtured”) themselves for “slaughter” – v.5b

It should be painfully obvious to us that selfishness can occur whether you have one dollar or a million!

Conclusion – see “Digging Deeper”

James made it that riches comes with dangers! We may focus on wealthy Christians. However, all believers are culpable because the amount of wealth is not at issue. It is how we may be corroded, corrupted, and consumed with it! We began with the **lens** of stewardship. Here are two ways in which we can give **legs** to act as wealth-wise followers of Jesus.

- **Contentment** – [I Timothy 6:6-10](#)

Paul urges contentment because it is rewarding and liberating. He explained that “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (v.6). However, to be consumed with wealth will imprison us – and condemn us, as in our text. Are you content? “*In the 1980’s, physician Robert Goldman famously found in his research that half of aspiring athletes would be willing to accept certain death in five years in exchange for an Olympic gold medal today.*” (**From Strength to Strength**, Arthur Brooks, Green Tree, 2023, 52)

- **Generosity** – [II Corinthians 8:1-9](#)

About the generosity of God in Christ, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they should consider the Macedonian believers. They were joyfully generous despite their trials and poverty - “*they gave themselves first of all to the Lord*” (v.5). They followed the pattern of God’s generosity. Living with godly generosity counters the dangers of wealth! In [Deuteronomy 15:11](#) and [Matthew 26:11](#) we are instructed that significant need will always exist around us. Because financial disparity is always before us, God’s desire is that we engage in compassionate ways, led by the Holy Spirit. This raises the faith-works debate. Remember, it is a **good work** to be generous. But this is another of our **faith-life** in Christ.

It is the will of God that we become generous givers. But He would never ask us to do what He has not first done for us...Throughout His life and teachings, Jesus issues definitive warnings for those of us who have accumulated any sort of surplus of financial resources. It is as if He is saying...*Watch out! Treat your money as though you were handling fire or even dynamite. Use it wisely and safely, and harness its energy to do good by disposing of it freely and joyfully.* (**Generosity: Moving Toward Life That Is Truly Life**, Gordon MacDonald, National Christian Foundation, 2009, 9, 28)

“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” (II Corinthians 8:9)