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Wealth and Suffering **James 5:1-12 (page1216)**

Two sections:

1. Wealth
2. Suffering

Ignoring James 5:12- Let your yes be yes



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Facts on wealth

1. This is not a sermon on the third world/inequality/poverty
2. The bible thinks wealth is a great thing
 - Abraham, Joseph, Boaz, Job...
3. If you have wealth you are blessed but you are cursed if you don't give it all to Jesus and His Church.
4. If you lie to Holy Spirit about the way you are using your wealth be wary



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Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.



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What is the role of wealth?

Growth of the Church

Relief to the poor

Creation of new social structures



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It grew because Christians constituted an intense community, able to generate the "invincible obstinacy" that so offended the younger Pliny but yielded immense religious rewards. And the primary means of its growth was through the united and motivated efforts of the growing numbers of Christian believers, who invited their friends, relatives, and neighbors to share the "good news."

Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*



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Why did the early church grow?

Status of Women (marginalised)

Response to a collapsing society

Refuge for the lost- epidemics, elites that helped

Wealthy people providing the economic engine



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Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; **not many were influential**; not **many were of noble birth**.— 1 Cor 1:26

- Some were of noble birth (only 0.6% of the UK are nobles)



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A certain woman named Lydia, **a seller of purple**, of the city of Thyatira, one who worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to listen to the things which were spoken by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and stay." So she persuaded us.

— Acts 16:14-15

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, **where many people had gathered and were praying**.

- Acts 12:12



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³ **Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household**; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

-Luke 8:3

Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. **Erastus, who is the city's director of public works**, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

- Romans 16:23

Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of **Narcissus** who are in the Lord.

- Romans 16:11



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At the same time, there is also a clear indication that many wealthy, important merchants and members of the nobility converted to Christianity. For instance, Tacitus (60–120 AD) writes in his *Annales* (ch. xiii) about the trial of Pomponia Graecina, 'a woman of high rank', the wife of Aulus Plautius who conquered the southern part of Britain (43–47 AD). During the year 57 AD he gave his wife over to trial, following ancient precedent in hearing his wife's case in the presence of family. He pronounced her innocent (see Bettenson 1943:1). It is possible that some of the most prominent Roman families converted at an early stage to Christianity, influencing many others around them. For instance, it is known that Emperor Domitian had relatives (his nephew, the consul T. Flavius and his wife Flavia Domitilla) executed who were known to be Christians and in line to become emperor (Latourette 1964:80; Bakhuizen van den Brink 1965:69).



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Communion



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Wealth and Suffering James 5:1-12 (page1216)

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.

The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.



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Return of Jesus is the hardest part of being a Christian

Nothing to do with the Rapture etc (late invention from the 1590s and 1700s)

They really thought he was coming back

Created an intense community



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