

## How Much is Enough?

James 5:1-6

4-28-2024

Without discussing it with their shareholders, the Tesla Board awarded Elon Musk a \$56 billion pay package, almost 4 times their entire profit for 2023. Some of their shareholders objected and took it to court where in January a Delaware judge rejected it as excessive.

Yet even after a 23% drop in profits for 2023, and another 55% decline in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, a 43% drop in their stock price this year, and the announcement of a 10% cut in their workforce due to falling demand and profits, Musk and Tesla are currently trying to have it reinstated.

### **So just how much is enough?**

In the late 90's there was a well-known businessman who entered divorce proceedings with his wife of many years. at the time, his net worth was estimated to be around \$5 billion. wanting to avoid a messy divorce that would disrupt his business, he offered his former wife \$1 billion if she would just walk away. she refused and wanted half. Thus, began messy divorce proceedings as their respective lawyers set about seeking the advantage in dividing the estate.

both parties, who were already in their 70's, were now destined to spend their remaining years bringing untold misery, frustration, and bitterness into each other's lives over more money than either of them could ever hope to even begin to spend.

after all, at that point in life, what can you do with \$5 billion that you couldn't do with \$1 billion.

### **Just how much is enough?**

in James 4:13-17, he addressed merchants and businessmen who were so busy making their plans for how to make money and get rich, they left little time or interest in seeking God and his will for their lives.

in chapter 5:1-6, he then turns his attention from the merchants trying to make money, to the wealthy, who already had it. and for whom it had taken the place of God in their lives.

he writes:

***“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 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. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.” (James 5:1–6)***

like so many other places in scripture, James is not speaking against wealth, but rather the misuse of it and making it the most important thing in your life he reserves some of his harshest words for those who abuse it.

he specifically makes 4 charges of how they were guilty of misusing their wealth and the judgement they were bringing on themselves because of it.

#### **I. the first charge is they were hoarding wealth**

they were never content or satisfied

no matter how much they had, it was never enough

so they spent their lives always striving for more, not because of need or because they had plans for it.

or even for a rainy-day fund.

they simply wanted more, to pile it up and add to their already bulging bank accounts

money had become their god and their lives were now defined by greed

with a note of irony, James said that no matter how much they had no matter how much they were able to accumulate and store away for safekeeping no matter how hard they tried to hold onto it All their wealth, which in that day would have been in grain, clothing, and precious metals, and he says it was all sitting there either rioting away, being eaten away, or rusting away

Jesus had warned of this very thing in Matthew 6:19 when he said do not store up treasure on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. Instead store up treasure in heaven where nothing can touch

***Haggai 1:5-6 warned, "Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.""***

because no matter how much, it would never be enough

**In his book, *The New New Thing*, Michael Lewis tells the story of Silicon Valley entrepreneur Jim Clark. Before he launched his company Silicon Graphics, he said he'd be happy making \$10 million. Then when he launched Netscape that changed and he said he'd be happy amassing a fortune of \$100 million. After he got yacht fever, he realized that when you're trying to build the worlds biggest yacht, \$100 million just isn't going to be enough. But \$1 billion, that ought to do it.**

**Then when he passed \$1 billion and he stood on top of Healtheon, a computerized medical clearinghouse, Clark told Lewis he'd be happy when he was worth more than software mogul Larry Ellison, who at that time was worth \$13 billion.**

**Just how much is enough?**

wealth is not the issue here, unchecked greed is

for those who make money their God, no matter how much they have, it will never be enough and will never be able to even start to satisfy their deepest needs and longings  
that is something only God can do

**Jesus said in Luke 12:21 that rather than hoarding and trying to get rich in the things of this world, we should strive to become rich toward God**

For only Jesus will ever be enough

***“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:6–10)***

this leads to James second charge against the wealthy who had made money their God

## **II. they gained their wealth at the expense of others**

taking advantage and cheating those who had no one to speak up for them  
paying as little as possible so they could keep as much as possible

***:4 says “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.” (James 5:4)***

most workers were day laborers who lived day to day with sparse savings and very little to spare

if they didn't work, it might mean they and their family would have little or nothing to eat that day

if the wealthy landowners decided to short them, what recourse did they have if you wanted to eat you had to work and too often, if you wanted to work you had to take what was given

if you made a stink about it or complained that you were cheated, you might get blacklisted, not just by the one who had cheated you, but he might talk to his friends, also likely to be wealthy landowners and therefore unable to find work in the future

throughout scripture it says God has a special concern for the poor, those at the bottom with no one to look out for them, those who are abused and taken advantage of by the rich who too often think they are above the law and it doesn't apply to them

**I wonder what God thinks of things like Musk asking for \$56 billion while the average pay of those who make the cars and do the actual work at Tesla is between \$55,000-60,000 or when for every \$1 the average employee makes in the US, their CEO makes \$344 at the top 370 companies, it is 670 to one**

**or when someone like Dave Calhoun, who in the face of ongoing investigations into cutting safety corners to increase profits at Boeing, can walk away with \$24 million and the possibility of up to \$45 million more**

**or like Michael Jordan who while he was still playing basketball, received even more from his endorsements than he did from playing basketball. he received more from his endorsement of Nike Air Jordan shoes, than the combined salary of all 18000 workers in sweat shops in Vietnam, Thailand and China who actually made the shoes. all for simply putting his name on them.**

**Just how much is enough!**

something may be legal but that doesn't make it ok both morally and ethically despite what we may say, it shows what we truly value

Jesus said wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

***the prophet Amos warned, "Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample down the needy! You can't wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out grain with dishonest measures and cheat the buyer with dishonest scales. And you mix the grain you sell with chaff swept from the floor. Then you enslave poor people for one piece of silver or a pair of sandals." (Amos 8:4–6)***

again, wealth isn't the issue, it's how we get it that matters  
are we taking advantage, cheating, or oppressing others in the process

### **III. the third charge in verse 5 is they lived lives of excess**

luxury and self-indulgence were the rule of the day

denying themselves nothing and enjoying their every heart's desire, with no concern for those around them who had little or nothing

the word used to describe it is hedonism

living for pleasure and a good time with no regard for others, no compassion for the needy or care for the hurting

life is all about me, what I want, and what will make me happy

***Amos describes them this way, "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!" (Amos 4:1)***

**while Michael Jordan was making as much from endorsements as the entire workforce of 18,000 was making for doing the work, his former teammate Scotty Pippen, who had grown up in great poverty, had just signed a new 3 year contract with the Portland Trailblazers which paid him almost \$15 million per year. On top of this, his endorsements added another \$15 million per year.**

**For someone raised in poverty, \$30 million a year would never have been dreamed of while growing up. Yet in a sport illustrated article he shared what went through his mind during every pre-game warmup in Portland's Rose Garden. Before every game, he said he only had eyes for one person. every game he'd motivate himself by letting his gaze drift over to the courtside seat occupied by Paul Allen, cofounder of Microsoft and owner of both the Portland Trail Blazers and Seattle Seahawks, a man who at that time had a personal net worth of \$40 billion. Pippen said he'd look at his employers geeky exterior and wonder, How does he do it?**

**In the article he said, He's an amazing guy to look at, man, his voice rising. what does he have? \$40 Billion? I want to know: How can I make a billion? I just want one of them! what do I need to do?...tell me how I can make a billion dollars. Tell me how I can become a billionaire.**

he had a 74-foot yacht, \$100,000 Mercedes, a fancy home, and every toy and luxury item he would ever want yet at that point it wasn't enough.

**Just how much is enough?**

being wealthy isn't the issue, it is what are we doing with it that matters are we living just for ourselves or for something more than just our pleasure

***"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)***

verse 6 contains the fourth charge when it says, you have condemned and murdered the innocent who could not resist or oppose you

IV. this was the charge of injustice and corruption

using wealth to have your way and receive special treatment  
acting as if rules and laws that apply to others don't apply to you

it is a direct reference to corrupting the courts so the poor had nowhere to turn when cheated or abused and oppressed  
in that world it was the rich and wealthy who served as judges and juries  
they controlled the system which was then stacked against those who were at the bottom

and because they controlled everything, they would do whatever they wanted to keep what they had  
and able to get away with it

it didn't matter how much, it was never enough

wealth wasn't the issue, justice was  
there was no justice to be found

***"If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered." (Proverbs 21:13)***

***Amos said, "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24)***

money and wealth were not the issue for James  
rather it was those trying to make it and those who already had it that were turning it into their god, something to pursue and hold onto no matter the cost  
so he warned them to weep and wail for the misery that that would bring

just how much is enough?

only Jesus will ever be enough  
only he can ever satisfy and meet our deepest needs and longings  
only that which is done in the Lord will last because only he is eternal

no matter how much or how hard we may try to get and hold onto, as this closing illustration shows, in the end it will all turn to ashes

**Scrat Gone Nutty**



