

The incident earned the title of *Méribah*,<sup>3</sup> meaning, “place of strife and contention” in the Hebrew, and set the stage for that generation’s persistent negative volition and eventual decline into full reversionism (Exodus 32; Numbers 14).<sup>4</sup>

**James 5:3** Your gold [ χρυσός (*chrusós*): a precious medal ] and your silver [ ἄργυρος (*árgusos*): a precious medal ] have rusted [ the intensive perfect passive indicative of the verb, [ κατιόω (*katióō*): tarnished ] and their rust [ ὁ ἴός (*ho íós*): venom ] will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! (NASB)

We return now to our study of James 5:3:

1. We have studied two doctrines: The Doctrine of Capacity and the Doctrine of Hardness of the Heart. The men in James, Chapter Five, lack the former but are in the advanced stages of the latter. They are independently rich in gold and silver, but their souls are vacuous. They have no capacity for their wealth because their souls are hardened from advanced reversionism.
2. Consequently, they have no capacity for happiness. This condition within their souls became a source for James to expose their unhappiness because they emphasize their material attributes while spiritual attributes are absent.
3. James 5:3 opens with this statement, “Your gold and your silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you ...”
4. The NASB translation of the third verse describes the condition of the gold and silver as having “rusted.” The Greek word for these precious metals are χρυσός [*chrusós*]: gold, and ἄργυρος [*árguros*]: silver, both precious medals.
5. We have established the fact that gold does not rust and pure silver does not either although pure silver is malleable so an alloy must be added for stability, usually with copper.
6. Pure gold does not rust, corrode, or tarnish while pure silver does but only to an exceedingly small degree. Yet, gold and silver are precious metals, but those who possess them are the ones who make decisions. Principle: The gold and silver are unaffected by those who possess them.

<sup>3</sup> מְרִיבָה (*Méribah*): It was the location of a place near Réphidim where there was no drinking water for Israel. The people verbally attacked Moses, and he struck a rock, at the Lord’s command, to bring forth water (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* [ Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003], s.v. מְרִיבָה [4808], 1765).

<sup>4</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr. *Thieme’s Bible Doctrine Dictionary* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2022), 122.



7. Therefore, the message in verse 3 really has nothing specifically to do with these two elements. The impact of the verse has everything to do with the two men who are introduced several times: “Your gold ... your silver... against you ... your flesh ... your treasure.”
8. The opening statement sets the tone, “Your gold and your silver have rusted.” We have already established the fact that gold and silver do not rust, yet James seems to contend that they do. Yet, it’s not the gold and silver that have rusted. What are rusted are the souls of the two men who possess these two precious metals.
9. Their souls do not have the soulish or mental wherewithal to enjoy, invest, spend, or even sell their gold and silver.
10. The issue that defines these two is their total lack of capacity, which we studied recently, and this is a brief synopsis of its spiritual advance in a believer’s soul:

Capacity from Bible doctrine and reciprocal love for God must precede blessing from God. Capacity comes as we learn Bible doctrine which drives garbage out of our subconscious. It is the beginning of inner beauty, inner blessing, and the dynamic spiritual life.

11. Gold provides wealth, but doctrine provides capacity for wealth. Gold has intrinsic value, yet it remains an inanimate object. Thus, gold does not provide happiness because it can be either a blessing or a curse dependent upon the person who possesses it.
12. Therefore, capacity to enjoy the acquisition, possession, or sale of gold or silver is all based on doctrine in the soul. Yet the verse suggests that the gold and silver of the men in context are corroded.
13. Next in the verse we have the phrase, “and their rust.” This is the second time that an English word is translated “rust” and that is a translation that could be cited here, as some do.
14. However, in the opening passage of the verse we find this statement:

**James 5:3a**                      Your gold and your silver **have rusted**  
[ the **intensive perfect passive indicative** of the verb, [ **κατιόω**  
(**katióō**): “tarnished” ] ...

15. The NASB translation of the verse continues with this phrase:

and their **rust** [ **ὁ ἰός** (**ho iós**): **venom** ] will be a witness against you ...

16. There are two different words in this text, the first being, *katióō*: “have rusted,” and a second one, *ὁ ἰός (ho iós)*, but translated, “rust.” However, the latter word should be translated, “venom.”
17. In the publication, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, third ed.; under the entry: *ἰός [iós]* we find the following translations:
1. *poison, venom*. Of animal (i.e., snake) poison.
  2. corrosion, rust. Gold is praised for being one-hundred proof; but if not refined or subject to chemical pollution, some metals in a gold object would be subject to oxidation.) James 5:3 is cited.<sup>5</sup>
18. As we have already observed, the precious medals in context are inanimate and do not have the power to make independent decisions. Therefore, the essence of each simply defines them and we impute to them names, such as gold, silver, copper, et al.
19. Let’s quote the opening sentence:

**James 5:3a** Your gold and your silver **have rusted** [ the **intensive perfect passive indicative** of the verb, *κατιόω (katióō)*: “tarnished” ];

20. The NASB translation of the verse continues with the following phrase:

**James 5:3b** and their **rust** [ *ὁ ἰός (ho iós)*: **venom** ] will be a witness against you ... (NASB)

21. This is a compound sentence. In the first quote, the gold and silver are said to “have rusted,” and the verb, *κατιόω (katióō)* is the “intensive perfect passive indicative. It is translated, ‘tarnished’.”
22. Let’s note some details on the verb, *κατιόω*:

### The Perfect Tense

The primary uses of the perfect tense are easy to comprehend, though they are not insignificant. As [J. H.] Moulton points out, the perfect tense is “the most important, exegetically, of all the Greek Tenses.”<sup>6</sup> The perfect is used less frequently than the present, aorist, future, or imperfect; when it is used, there is usually a deliberate choice on the part of the writer.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bauer, “*ἰός*” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. & ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 477.

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Prolegomena*. 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & C. Clark, 1908), 1:140.



The force of the perfect tense is simply that it describes an event that, completed in the past (we are speaking of the perfect indicative here), has results existing in the present time ... *it denotes the continuance of completed action.*<sup>7</sup>

The chart [ see visual: The Greek Perfect Tense ] shows that the perfect may be viewed as combining the aspects of both the aorist and present tense. It speaks of completed action (aorist) with existing results (present). The basic question to be asked is which of these aspects is emphasized in a given context.

The Intensive Perfect. a. *Definition.* The perfect may be used to *emphasize* the results or present state produced by a past action. This is the common use of the perfect tense.<sup>8</sup>

23. **Κατιόω**: this verb is intensive. The NASB's translation is "rusted," but the better choice is "tarnished." It is followed in its English translation by the phrase, "and their **rust** will be a witness against you."
24. The word that is translated, "rust," is not the verb, **Κατιόω**, but rather these two words: **ὁ ἰός (ho iós)**: "venom," like that which serpents eject from their fangs. Two major species of snakes are (1) the **víperids**, e.g., rattlesnakes and moccasins who inject venom with their long tubular fang and (2) the **élapids**, i.e., cobras, mambas, and coral through the short, hollow fang on the fixed maxillary bone.<sup>9</sup>
25. Then, as the verse continues, it reads, "...and their rust: **ὁ ἰός (ho iós)**: "**venom**" will be a witness against you.
26. Nowhere in this passage are venomous snakes introduced. Both gold and silver are mentioned at the very first of the verse and later they are accused of being rusted which pure gold and silver never do.
27. The NASB translation continues with the word "rust" mentioned again. But is this an accurate translation? No, it is not as we have noted above, this phrase means, "venom." This is the place where the presence of snakes is introduced but they are not present in this context.

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<sup>7</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev., R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 175.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 247.

<sup>9</sup> Heinz Fritz Wermuth, "Reptiles: Serpents" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2010), 26:718.



28. Again, the *King James Version*, *The NET Bible*, *New International Version*, and *New American Standard Bible* each use “rust” it to translate ὁ ἰός (*ho iós*) which should be translated, “venom.”
29. The issue in context has to do with the two reversionists who have garbage in their souls. It is venom in *their* souls that is being revealed!
30. When translating a passage, the pastor’s responsibility is to go to the original languages, in this case the Koine Greek, and determine the best English translation for a word. To do this we must consult lexicons and dictionaries that cite each word found in Scripture.
31. This work has been done, but to verify a word one must first consult the *King James Version*. This is because *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is based in that translation.
32. Therefore, the word in the *King James Version* is “rust.” One must look up that word in the Concordance where you discover the Greek word is, ὁ ἰός (*ho iós*): “venom.” Let’s do this.
33. First of all, *Strong’s* assigns to every word in the Bible a number. Every time a word is used in Scripture, James Strong entered it into his *Concordance*.
34. When you look up the word, “rust,” you find its number is 2447 in the New Testament. When you go to that number in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, this is what you discover: ὁ ἰός (*ho iós*), with this definition:

**Something sent out, emitted, hence venom that serpents eject from their fangs. (Romans 3:13 uses the word “poison” but the Greek word is the same.**

Because of the misuse of the word “rust” in the *King James Version*, this excerpt continues its analysis:

**(Romans 3:13 quoted from Psalm 140:3; James 3:8; rust as being emitted or formed on metals (James 5:3).<sup>10</sup>**

35. I repeat—once again—in the *King James Version*, Letter of James, there is no word “rusted” in Koine Greek of verse 3. The best word to use is κατιόω (*katióō*): “tarnished,” which does not occur on pure gold and only minutely on pure silver which can be easily removed.
36. Secondly, there is no word for “rust” which we just documented above. The correct phrase is, ὁ ἰός (*ho iós*): “venom,” which is precisely defined as:

**(End JAS5-04. See JAS-05 for continuation of study at p. 41.)**

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<sup>10</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 777.

