

WISDOM'S CRY

Here's a topic near and dear to the human heart – riches. In Revelation chapter five, the multitudes of worshippers around the throne in heaven proclaim that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is worthy of seven things. In "Power to the Lord", we examined the first which is power. The second is riches. Why is He worthy of them?

There is perhaps no other single issue that has enticed, entranced and/or enslaved the church throughout the age as much as riches. So much spiritual garbage has been passed around on it in our contemporary setting that many, many Christians cannot fathom a spiritual walk without including its pursuit. This is especially true in America where capitalism and conservatism are frequently so closely associated with Christianity that to question either of them is tantamount to questioning the 'true faith'. This is in spite of the fact that the Bible says that, "...the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim 6:10)

Oh yes, riches are such an attraction to both pewsters and pastors that it has often been taught from the pulpit that a man's spiritual walk is closely tied to his wallet. So, as we consider this topic, we must be careful to stick to the Word. Of course that's true with all our topics but perhaps especially so herein because like the Pharisees of Jesus'

day, we also have elevated traditions or man made opinions to the level of scripture and in some cases we don't even recognize that.

Riches are presented in the Bible in both negative and positive ways. As we look at both 'angles', you'll come to realize just why Jesus is indeed worthy of them. Now, the first mention of riches is in Genesis 13 where they were the main thing that brought division between Abram and his nephew Lot. They both had acquired so much stuff that they literally overburdened the land where they dwelt. Now, Abram considered Lot so dear that in a later chapter he risked his own life and the lives of all his servants to rescue him from an invading army. Nevertheless, the idea of divesting themselves of some of their riches in order to hang together never occurred to them. They esteemed their riches more greatly than their fellowship – thus the family breakdown. Of note is that they acquired much if not most of these riches in Egypt when Abraham, then called Abram, pulled the wool over Pharaoh's eyes so to speak by calling Sarai, who was his wife, his sister. (See Gen 12:16)

Later, however, in the book of 1 Kings, God speaking to Solomon said, "Because you have asked this thing (wisdom), and have not asked long life for yourself, **nor have asked riches for yourself**, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like

you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And **I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor**, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days." (1 Kings 3:11-13)

Solomon was known for millennia as the richest man who ever lived. Later in his life though, the king turned away from the Lord who had blessed him so amazingly. Yet interestingly enough, the Bible records that it was not the riches which caused his backsliding but his enormous number of wives (see 1 Kings 11:4). Apparently, many of them introduced (and seduced) him to worship their own gods as did their people from the surrounding countries.

So with that introduction, let's look more closely at both sides of the coin on this issue. We'll start with the negative aspects:

Psa 49:6,7 - Those **who trust in their wealth**

And boast in the multitude of their riches,

None of them can by any means redeem his brother,

Nor give to God a ransom for him

Psa 52:6-8 - The righteous also shall see and fear,

And shall laugh at him, saying, "Here is the man who did not make God his strength,

But trusted in the abundance of his riches,

And strengthened himself in his wickedness."

But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;

I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

Pro 11:28 - He who **trusts in his riches** will fall,

But the righteous will flourish like foliage.

Eze 28:4 - **With your wisdom and your understanding**

You have gained riches for yourself,

And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; (spoken to the Prince of Tyrus who is a type of Satan's son, the AC)

Mat 13:22 - Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the **deceitfulness of riches** choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Mar 10:23,24 - Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who **trust in riches** to enter the kingdom of God!

1 Tim 6:17 - Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to **trust in uncertain riches** but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Now, fundamentally, you can see from the verses above (emphasis mine) the error of the wicked is that they put their trust in their riches. Also, we note that they do not acquire their wealth from the Lord but by their own means. When

Jesus referred to the deceitfulness of riches, He was pointing to the truth of these scriptures – the enticement of mammon is to draw the heart of man into a bogus trust relationship. Sinful man, including the fleshly sin nature of believers, has the inclination to trust in “uncertain riches” and I’ll suggest that this is so at least partly because of the means by which they are acquired. However, before we expound on this, let’s consider the ‘other side of the coin’.

Psa 104:24 - O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of **thy riches**.

Psa 112:1,3 - Blessed is the man that **fears the LORD**, that **delights greatly in his commandments**... Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endures for ever.

Pro 3:13,16 - Happy is the man that **finds wisdom**... Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

Pro 8:1,18 - Doth not **wisdom** cry? and understanding put forth her voice?... Riches and honour are with me; yea, **lasting riches and righteousness**.

Pro 13:7 - There is one who **makes himself rich**, yet has nothing; And one who **makes himself poor**, yet has great riches.

Pro 22:4 - By **humility and the fear of the LORD** are riches and honor and life.

Luk 16:10,11,13b - *He who is **faithful in what is least** is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the **true riches**?... You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Rom 2:4 - Or do you despise the riches of **His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering**,...

Rom 9:23 - ...that He might make known the riches of **His glory** on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,...

Rom 11:33 - Oh, the depth of the riches both of the **wisdom and knowledge of God!**

Eph 3:8 - To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches of Christ**,...

From these verses, we can see that God’s Wisdom, the Old Testament’s way of alluding to the gift/presence of the Holy Spirit, is the creating force and guide into the true riches. This Wisdom leads one into a healthy fear of the Lord and a deep delight from His Word. Indeed, happy is the one who responds to Wisdom’s cry and seeks her out. The riches that Holy Spirit leads one to are “lasting”; that is, they are eternal and are accompanied by a right standing before God.

“To lay up for yourselves treasure on earth is also to doom yourself to

a life of frustration and emptiness. Regarding material things, the secret to happiness is not *more*, it is *contentment*. In a 1992 survey, people were asked how much money they would have to make to have “the American dream.” Those who earn \$25,000 or less a year thought they would need around \$54,000. Those in the \$100,000 annual income bracket said that they could buy the dream for an average of \$192,000 a year. These figures indicate that we typically think we would have to have double our income in order to find the good life. But the Apostle Paul had the right idea in 1 Timothy 6:6: *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*” – D. Guzik

Each man has a choice, to attempt to make himself rich materially – i.e. to be absorbed by the pursuit of and servitude to mammon, or to make himself poor spiritually – to be absorbed by the pursuit of and servitude to Father God. **It is impossible to do both.** The consequence of the former is to remain a pitiful pawn of lifeless stuff. The consequence of the latter is to become an eternal vessel and conduit of the unsearchable riches of Christ – humility, faithfulness, goodness, forbearance, longsuffering, wisdom and the knowledge of God.

“The Lord says, ‘Hey, don’t lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. The value of gold is apt to depreciate, silver is apt to depreciate; moth and rust can corrupt it, thieves can break through and steal. But lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and

where thieves do not break through nor steal.’ (Mat 6:20) Now, he has a reason behind this. Why should you be laying up treasures in heaven instead of here upon the earth? The whole reason is this - wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Mat 6:21).” – Chuck Smith

Now, consider Christ; why is He proclaimed in heaven to be worthy of riches? I submit that it is because He made the perfectly right choices concerning trust and obedience – He chose to obey the Father’s will and come to earth. He chose to fulfill and obey God’s Word. He chose to reject the temptation of material wealth and power offered by Satan in the wilderness. He chose to live a life completely dependent upon God even though it meant no where to lay His head, a dishonest, back-stabbing ‘accountant’ (Judas), a simple wardrobe (one outer garment), and the cross of Calvary.

I also submit that in our day and age, much of the church has become the very antithesis of this. Our church buildings, attendance rosters and temporal ambitions are not pleasing God. It is time for us to repent, to change our ways. We are blind, naked and in desperate need of Him! We need our eyes opened to our true state before it’s too late.

May we all seek His guidance in this most sincerely so that, with the saints who have gone before us, we also may be found happily among that heavenly host richly proclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb!