

## Rich In What?

<sup>19</sup> *“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.” – Luke 16:19 (ESV)*

Oh, what a life! This is the dream to which most of us aspire. A life of plenty. Plenty of clothes, food and money. A luxurious life. We have been schooled into believing that success centres around a good education, a good job, a nice car and a beautiful home in which the family lives...and a lot of money in the bank.

Let me state from the onset that nothing is wrong with being blessed in these areas of our lives. It is not a sin to be rich nor is poverty (as once preached) an indication of pious living. God desires that we are ‘prosperous’ in all areas of our lives, including our finances: 3 John 2 states:

*“2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” - 3John 2(NKJV).*

However, in order to further explore the topic of money and wealth, I would like to examine some key verses of Scripture, namely:

- (i) *“<sup>10</sup> For 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 Timothy 6:10 (KJV)*

What is sin – or the ‘root of all evil’ – is the love of money. We all know that people do all sorts of things, including illegal activities, to acquire large sums of money. The popular slogan ‘Get rich or die trying’ seems to be the anthem of a significant number of people. Moreover, life is dubbed a ‘rat race’ where the anticipated prize is often material success.

In the above scripture, however, Timothy warns us that this love of money has caused some to abandon the faith, and has brought with it ‘many sorrows.’ For the Word of God says that we cannot serve two masters: God and money. Matthew 6:24 explains that we will love one and hate the other.

- (ii) *“<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life— is not from the Father but from the world.*

*<sup>17</sup>The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God remains forever."*

According to Timothy, this love of money is often brought on by covetousness or greed – an eager desire for wealth or possessions. But this desire is fuelled by the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. It is all about satisfying 'self.' We want as much material wealth, possessions and pleasures that we can acquire in this life-time: money, entertainment, cars, houses, stocks, land and so on. This is what is often referred to as 'worldliness.' It is this seemingly unquenchable desire for money, described as 'the love of money,' that is referred to as 'sin.' It is fuelled mainly by the lust of the eyes.

It is in this context, and to warn us against the dangers of being covetous, that we are told not to 'love the world or anything in the world.' The grave danger is that in doing so, we can allow the things of this world – our wealth and possessions – to become our idols. Idolatry is a sin in the eyes of God. In the end, this possessive love of the world, as mainly seen in one's love for money, will turn us away from God

Therefore, where money and wealth are concerned, it is important that we examine our motives: why do we do what we do? If it is grounded in covetousness and idolatry then our resulting actions are sinful.

(iii) *<sup>18</sup>...they hear the word, <sup>19</sup>but the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." - Mark 4:19.*

These painful outcomes which Timothy spoke about demonstrate how the deceitfulness of riches can ruin many lives. Many pursue wealth at the expense of healthy family life and personal well-being.

However, the greatest tragedy is where this unbridled desire for wealth – greed – and the desire for 'other things' have 'killed' the Word of God from flourishing in people's hearts. Mark 4:19 says the Word of God becomes 'unfruitful.' In other words, all that the individual is destined to become, that is, to achieve his or her fullest potential is never realized.

This is exactly the road the devil wants us to walk for the rest of our lives: to forget God and His Word and to be busy living a life where the focus is mainly on getting rich. Money. Money, Money.

- (iv) <sup>19</sup> *"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day." – Luke 16:19 (ESV)*

The rich man had everything that money could buy. His external appearances attested to that fact: expensive clothes adorned with costly jewellery, a beautiful mansion, the best food, the latest model luxurious cars and the likes.

But what was the condition of his heart or his spirit man? Did he believe in God? Or did he believe that he only had 'one life to live', and that he should 'live it to the max?'

As stated, God desires that we be prosperous, and that we enjoy the beautiful things that life has to offer. What makes the difference is our attitude towards money. Do we see it as a 'means to an end:' a necessity in life to satisfy our needs and to further the kingdom of God on this earth? Or is it seen as 'an end in itself:' to be consumed only on 'self' and to be hoarded? The latter describes what is regarded as 'the love for money.' This mind-set opens the door for the spirit of covetousness to enter our lives.

- (v) Although I am encouraged to be prosperous and fruitful in life, it must not be at the expense of a 'malnourished' soul. A second reading of 3 John 2 will show that both our material life and our spiritual life should both prosper simultaneously, and to the same measure or extent:

<sup>2</sup> *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." – 3 John 2 (NKJV).*

Therefore, the same dedication and passion that I adopt in ensuring material success and physical health, should also be seen in my pursuit of gaining spiritual health and wealth.

- (vi) *"36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" - Mark 8:36 (KJV).*

The battle in this life is for one's soul, and to determine where it spends eternity: either in heaven or in hell. Let's all think very carefully and soberly about the question asked in Mark 8:36.

Be blessed.

## Principles:

- The love of money is the root of all evil.
- Guard against covetousness, which is generally occasioned by greed.
- The deceitfulness of riches can cause us to turn away from God and His Word.
- What is our attitude towards money and wealth? Is it seen as 'a means to an end' or 'an end in itself'?
- We need to pursue spiritual wealth and health in the same degree, and with the same passion as we pursue material wealth and health.
- The battle is for my soul and whether it will spend eternity in heaven or in hell.

*Heavenly Father,*

*I thank You for Your Word which is food for my soul. Lord, I recognize that the love of money is the root of all evil. Guard my mind and heart against the spirit of covetousness and greed. Help me not to spend fall prey to the deceitfulness of riches which seeks to choke the Word of God from my heart, and to prevent me from building healthy relationships with God and His Son Jesus. Give me the right attitude towards money and material possessions. Grant unto me wisdom, knowledge and understanding to know that this world is enmity with God, and that God should always be at the centre of my life. Keep me from being drawn away by any idolatrous spirit. I understand that this life is not about how much money that I have and the amount of material wealth that I possess. I know that the battle is for my soul. Thank You for keeping me grounded daily in Your Word, as I seek to develop a deeper relationship with You and Your Son, Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray with thanksgiving. Amen."*

## Memory Verse:

*"<sup>36</sup> For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" - Mark 8:36 (KJV).*