

WEALTH AND MONEY (Sermon by Head Pastor)

In taking up the subject of Money, Wealth, and Poverty, and what the Bible has to say about it, we ended our last lesson from James 1:9-11:

⁹Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, ¹⁰But the rich in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. ¹¹For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat than it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth. So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

We ended our last lesson by stating that: "The believer's wealth can never be calculated in dollars. We are rich in peace, in righteousness, and in hope; and neither adversity nor ill-health can take away such wealth from us. It is all because He, the Lord Jesus Christ became poor. Let the brother of low degree rejoice."

James turns now to the rich: "But the rich, in that he is made low." This thought borders on contempt of wealth. James warns the rich man throughout the Epistle, let us read James 2:2-6:

²For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? (NKJV Bible)

James 5:1-6: ¹Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!* ²Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ⁴Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. (NKJV)

Somehow I cannot bring myself to disagree with James, since the perils of wealth are quite obvious. Paul wrote in 1st Timothy 6:17, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (KJV)

The Bible speaks about wealth and the wealthy. One of the snares into which the wealthy fall so often is the confidence they have in their riches rather than in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that they become POSSESSED by their POSSESSIONS. Wealth makes it difficult for a man or woman to humble

himself or herself making them a target for Satan to attack with pride and an air of superiority.

Those who are rich in this world's goods must remember that they received whatever they now possess. Everything they possess came by the mercy of God. I warn such, not to trust in their riches, because riches are uncertain. What you have today may be gone tomorrow.

Proverbs 23:5 "...Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle..." Our Lord said in Mark 10:23: "...How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Few rich people are sufficiently humbled enough to be saved.

Our Lord Jesus addressed a rich young man who had come to Him in quest of eternal life. This young man had inherited wealth but not eternal salvation. What he possessed was only temporal and he knew it. The Lord put the rich young man to the test to see if he was willing to lay aside his worldly goods to get eternal life. But the young man failed the test for eternal life because he was unwilling to part with his worldly wealth, and he was sad and went away grieved, "for he had great possessions." (v.22).

Then our Lord Jesus Christ, looking at the entire group in a single glance, said: "With what difficulty shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (v.23)

Satan places many varied barriers in the way of all who would be saved. In this instance the barrier is money. Then our Lord added: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (v.24) Our Lord does not declare it impossible for a wealthy person to be saved, but He is stated that it is difficult to get that person saved.

The story of the camel and the needle's eye teaches that he whose love of riches keeps him from submitting trustfully to Jesus Christ cannot go to heaven. Another Biblical example of the teaching of James is to be found in our Lord's account of the rich man and the beggar in

Luke 16:19-31: ¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' ²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send

him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (NKJV)

The poor beggar named Lazarus died, and his soul was carried by the angels of God to be with the believing dead who had died in the Lord, not because he was poor, but because he was a believer. The rich man died also and went to hell and conscious torment, not because he was rich, but because he was merciless, unkind, selfish, inhospitable, and did not show any Christian love toward Lazarus the beggar.

It is with great difficulty that a man with riches could enter into the kingdom of God! Returning now to James we hear him speak to the wealthy believer telling him to rejoice "in that he is made low." For a Jew to accept Jesus Christ meant that he would be dispossessed of any and all inheritance, cut off completely from loved ones as though he were dead.

Such practice is not uncommon in our day. Paul testifies in Philippians 3:8: "Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One)," (Amplified Bible)

The mighty Saul of Tarsus was brought low; but he rejoiced, for in losing any earthly prestige and possessions, he gained eternal riches in Jesus Christ. When a wealthy person becomes saved, he, like any other Christian is called to a life of separation, he does not at once step out of a wealthy class of the unsaved into a wealthy class of saved persons.

If his heart is right with God, he discovers that in Christ he is no higher than the poorest of his brethren in Christ. Now why should the rich man or woman rejoice in that he or she is made low? Because as James said, "Because as the flower of the grass he or she shall pass away." When death comes he or she will be as the poor person.

Both must leave everything behind when that last hour strikes. A lovely flower does not bloom forever, for its life and loveliness is soon gone. It is beautiful while it lasts but its life span is short. Riches may be useful in this life, but death severs a man and his wealth forever. Let the rich Christian rejoice only in his eternal wealth in Christ.

Since James will have more in his Epistle to say about money, let us again quote James 1:11, "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

As grass and flowers are scorched and wilted by a hot, dry wind, so will the rich man and his riches fade away from this earthly scene. There is a WAY which seemeth right unto man, and with many it is the way of accumulating wealth, but the one who pursues THAT way must "fade away" in his purposes and pursuits to get richer.

As the sweetness and beauty go from a fading flower, so is the wretched end of the rich man who forgets God. His plans and projects go unfinished. His hopes perish. The true child of God possesses an inheritance, which Peter tells us in 1st Peter 1:4: "an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." (KJV)

The rich man, as any rich man or woman, fades away as do their riches; the Christian, as all true Christians, and their inheritance never fades. Life at its best is brief and uncertain.

The Lord Jesus said, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed." John 6:27.

Giving to support the Church and ministry, to the Poor and Missionary is all part of a Christian's responsibility. Deuteronomy 16:17: "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that He has given you."

2nd Corinthians 9:6-7, "The point is this: 'whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'" (ESV)

A person reaps IN KIND what he has sown and he reaps MORE than what he has sown. He only reaps what he has sown, not that which he has stored. The more he sows, the more he reaps. Thus, little giving will reap little blessing, and much giving will reap much blessing. The contrast is between "sparingly" and "bountifully," literally, "on the basis of blessings."

This principle supports the teaching of Christ: in Luke 6:38, "Give, and [gifts] will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will they pour into [the pouch formed by] the bosom [of your robe and used as a bag]. For with the measure you deal out [with the measure you use when you confer benefits on others], it will be measured back to you." (Amplified Bible)

Proverbs 11:25, "The liberal person shall be enriched, and he who waters shall himself be watered." (Amplified Bible)

Christians should not give thoughtlessly, without preparation; their giving should be done according to the standard of voluntary, planned determination.

"Every man **according** as he **purposeth** in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (KJV)

The Amplified Bible says: "Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under

compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving]. (2nd Corinthians 9: 7).

The word "purposeth" means "to choose beforehand." All the giving by a believer should point back to a time when he made a decision before God to give himself and his SUBSTANCE to the Lord. The purpose and desire to give must originate within the "heart".

It must be self-originated, not in a forced conformity to a plan devised by others. No believer is exempt from giving. The minister and the church member, the missionary and the national believer, and the poor and rich all can give in this fashion.

God does not want one penny from you if you would rather keep it to yourself. God does not want your money if you give it grudgingly or out of necessity. This type of giver hurts when giving: He knows that he must, but he winces when it comes to putting his money in the "Offering Box."

I (Head Pastor) do not like to project myself into this discussion, but there is much teaching in the Scriptures about making sure that the Pastor is also adequately taken care of; that the members would make it their business to see that he has a livable income.

Denominational Churches give their ministers or Pastors a decent salary, really quite formidable, besides a regular guaranteed salary. They usually receive a car, a house to live in, vacation time with pay, and retirement benefits.

I worked and was employed in a secular job until I reached my 79th birthday, and with our rather small congregation at the present time, I do not expect or ask for a regular guaranteed salary.

Let us read 1st Corinthians 9:8,9,11,14: ⁸Do I say this only on human authority and as a man reasons? Does not the Law endorse the same principle? ⁹For in the Law of Moses it is written, You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. Is it [only] for oxen that God cares? ¹¹If we have sown [the seed of] spiritual good among you, [is it too] much if we reap from your material benefits? ¹⁴[On the same principle] the Lord directed that those who publish the good news (the Gospel) should live (get their maintenance) by the Gospel. (Amplified Bible)

According to the natural laws of society, workers are to be paid for their labor. A soldier is not expected to pay for his own uniform, lodging, food, travel expenses, and weapons. A farmer who plants and cares for a vineyard has a perfect right to eat of its grapes. A shepherd has the right to drink the milk of the flock and sell the wool.

These human rights are supported by divine commandments. Paul quotes the rights of animals, stating that the ox has the right to eat of the grain that he has trod, and he showed that the rights of working animals, in principle, apply to the rights of human workers.

The real intent behind the command for the humane treatment of animals was the proper reimbursement of laborers. Paul used this same Old Testament verse to demonstrate that church elders should be given proper financial support. 1st Timothy 5:17,18:

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

In conclusion, those who work at the beginning or the ending of a project (plowing or threshing) should do so with the full expectation that they will equally share in the profits. Paul says, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

From this we are assured that the principle of accepting support from one’s congregation has full authority from the Lord. As the Old Testament priests were supported by the people, so Paul said the same procedure continues in the New Testament dispensation with God’s full approval.

The members of a congregation should not fail in their obligation to care adequately for the needs of the faithful shepherd of the flock. A minister of the gospel who cares for the spiritual needs of his people has a perfect right to accept gifts from his congregation to care for his temporal needs.

A beautiful scene is presented in Mark 12:41-44: ⁴¹And He sat down opposite the treasury and saw how the crowd was casting money into the treasury. Many rich [people] were throwing in large sums. ⁴²And a widow who was poverty-stricken came and put in two copper mites [the smallest of coins], which together make half of a cent. ⁴³And He called His disciples [to Him] and said to them, Truly and surely I tell you, this widow, [she who is] poverty-stricken, has put in more than all those contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For they all threw in out of their abundance; but she, out of her deep poverty, has put in everything that she had--[even] all she had on which to live.” (Amplified Bible).

Our Lord Jesus observed the people casting their voluntary contributions for God’s service into the public collecting box or “treasury.” He saw “many who were rich casting in much”. At last he saw this poor widow cast in all that she had for her daily maintenance. And then we hear the Lord Jesus pronounce the solemn words,

“This poor woman hath cast more in than they all.” She put in more in the sight of Him who looks not merely at the amount given, but at the ABILITY of the giver—not merely at the quantity contributed, but at the MOTIVE and HEART of the contributor.

Remember, the Parable of the Rich Fool? Luke 12:16-21: ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But God

said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." A vast number of people who claim to be Christians spend fortunes on themselves, and yet do not give even a dime to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through His minister or pastor.

Let us pray to God to open the eyes of men and women, and awake men's and women's hearts, and to stir up a spirit of liberality. Above all, let us each do our own duty, and give liberally to every Christian entity while we can. There will be no giving when we are dead neither can we take any of our riches with us when we die.

Let us give as those who remember that the eyes of Christ are watching us. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ sees exactly what each gives, and knows exactly how much is left behind. Above all let us give as the disciples of a crucified Savior, who gave Himself for us, His Body and Soul on the Cross so we may have eternal life.

Freely we have received the Mercy and Grace of our Almighty Father and God through the redemption and justification by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us freely give from our heart, purposefully in obedience to Holy Scripture. God bless you. Amen.

We are always glad to give Scriptural advice and counsel to those who desire to write us about their problems, and to remember their requests for prayer in our services.

In addition, we publish sermons on other subjects, which take up in detail teaching on how to deal with God successfully and be delivered from the power of sin and Satan; the fullness of the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Word of GOD as written in The Holy Bible; healing and protection of the body through dependence upon GOD alone, God's financial plan and the pre-millennial coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sent Free to all who request.

Reproduced by: First Century Gospel Church (MD, VA, Washington DC Metro Area Branch)
11960 Glen Alden Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

Headquarters: First Century Gospel Church
Box 99
Pottersville, NJ 07979 U.S.A.
website: <http://www.fcgchurches.org>; <http://www.fcgchurches.com>
email: fcgusa@yahoo.com; pastor@fcgchurches.org

Wealth and Money
March 4, 2007