

Principles of Wealth

Part 2 - Better Than Riches

August 30, 1998

- **Review & Introduction**

As you will recall, over the last couple of years, a number of men have requested that we teach on the topic of finances and tithing. This is a good and healthy thing. However, before we reach the specific topic of tithing we must have the broader perspective provided in the Scriptures so that we may understand our entire condition before God. Credit where credit is due: this series draws much from a series I originally heard a number of years ago taught by Doug Wilson.

As we considered last week, despite an abundance of instruction in the Scriptures, Christians frequently look to the world first for wisdom rather than the wisdom from God. We also considered four principles that will be important through this entire series::

- There is wealth under the blessing of God
- There is wealth under the curses of God
- There is poverty under the blessing of God
- There is poverty under the curses of God

As those who wear His name, we naturally want to be under the blessings of God, so last week we looked at a number of means by which God's blessings flow to us. We cannot simply look at our abundance or lack of wealth and come to biblical conclusions about the blessing of God, we must instead examine our life as well. When we attempt to do that examination, by what standard do we evaluate what we find? How are we to know whether our steps are ordered in line with the Scriptures or not?

- **Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge**

13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding;¹⁴ For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold.¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Proverbs 3:13-15; Proverbs 16:16; Proverbs 20:15

These verses present a contrast between wisdom and wealth. In our minds we have a series of priorities by which our actions are shaped. Do we have firmly planted in our minds this contrast between wisdom and wealth? It is not enough to simply be able to recite this verse; the real test lies in how we conduct our affairs. Can we examine our lives and observe in our behavior a love for wisdom that exceeds a love of wealth?

Notice also that although the two are presented here as a contrast for the sake of establishing priorities, wisdom and riches are not mutually exclusive. We may be wealthy and unwise as easily as we could be poor while demonstrating great wisdom.

- **Righteousness**

8 Better is a little with righteousness, Than vast revenues without justice. Proverbs 16:8; Proverbs 19:1; Proverbs 28:6

A life free from the entanglements of sin and the fear of eternal judgement far exceeds any hope provided by riches.

- **A Good Reputation**

1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.² The rich and the poor have this in common, The Lord is the maker of them all. Proverbs 22:1-2

It is God who grants a good reputation or not. In His usual course of providence, a good reputation is gained over a long period of time and is removed quickly. But notice here that we are not being self-centered when we pursue a good name. It is a good and great thing for us to long for a good name. There are many things in our business lives that can affect our good name, here are a few:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services provided in a timely manner as promised• Work done with honesty in appearance and in fact• Not taking advantage of work done by fellow Christians• Avoiding work that depends on scheming | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoidance of deceptive or punitive pricing• Work done vigorously with wisdom• Work which understands propriety• Being kind, gracious and generous |
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- **Humility**

19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud. Proverbs 16:19

The arrogance of godless riches is a testimony against the people. When God delivers riches to the ungodly, He will frequently also (as we considered last week) deliver leanness to their soul so that they are unable to truly enjoy the wealth. When they then boast in their riches, they further heap judgement upon themselves. The reverse is also true; there are those who take pride in poverty and treat with contempt both those who have riches and He who gives riches. In both cases, whether proud and poor or boastful and wealthy, these people demonstrate that they are not under the blessings of God.

- **Contentment**

8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me;⁹ Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. Proverbs 30:8-9

In essence, this is a prayer for contentment and protection from temptation. The author knows that with great abundance, he is tempted to forget God and boast in himself. He also knows that in severe poverty he may be tempted to be angry toward God. Contentment is a blessing from God to all, whether poor or wealthy. A truly content heart can give genuine thanks with ease.

- **Domestic Tranquility**

16 Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, Than great treasure with trouble.¹⁷ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred. Proverbs 15:16-17

We have all seen examples of people who appear to have great wealth and yet they end up in divorce or their home is a train wreck. A home that is preserved as a refuge of peace is a great blessing from the Lord. The finest household goods, foods, clothing, cars, yards (even power tools) are no replacement for a quiet, joyful home.