

Principles of Wealth

Part 3 - Moths, Rust, Thieves and Things That Destroy Wealth

September 6, 1998

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;²⁰ "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.³ Your 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.⁴ Indeed 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.⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.⁶ You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. James 5:1-6

• Review & Introduction

As we have already considered, there are four fundamental principles which will continue to undergird our study of wealth. They are:

- 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

Many times in the Scriptures issues are black and white and faithlessness with regard to the issue can easily be spotted and identified. Other times, there is a very fine line between faithfulness and sin. Wealth falls into this last category. Should we seek after wealth? We do every day as we pursue our vocations. But we must remember that the wealth should not be the object of our pursuits rather, it is the blessing of God that we seek. In His good providence, that blessing may manifest itself in riches or it may be made manifest in adequate means. But we pursue neither wealth nor poverty as the end of our efforts. We must set our sights on pleasing our Lord and seeking His blessing or favor.

• Sensual Snares

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 NKJV

25 The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, But the stomach of the wicked shall be in want. Proverbs 13:25

God has created us in such a way that we have many sensual needs or appetites. The immediate context of this second verse is of course food but the principle holds for any of the appetites that we may have. Paul warns that those who desire to be rich will come to destruction because of harmful lusts which will entrap them like a snare. Generally speaking, the desire for creature-comforts is good and expected. However, these comforts can become snares when we are not in proper relationship with God. For example, the verse in proverbs says that the wicked cannot find contentment at the table yet the righteous man does down to his inmost being. How is this? It is because the wicked long for eternal things and become frustrated when temporal things do not satisfy the eternal longings. But the righteous who are in proper relationship with God expect only creature-comforts from the temporal table. As this is all the table can truly provide, the righteous are satisfied and the wicked progressively look for more eternal from the temporal.

• Luxury

10 Luxury is not fitting for a fool, Much less for a servant to rule over princes. Proverbs 19:10

The first thing to remember is that in the Scriptures a fool is not someone who is intellectually slow. A fool in the Scriptures is one who is morally degenerate; the heart of a fool is wickedness because he has a moral problem not an intellectual problem. In this verse, we see that when a fool is clothed or surrounded in wealth it should be a picture that looks out of sorts. Notice that this is not a condemnation of luxury but rather the disregard that a fool has for this kind of blessing. A fool (who by definition lacks wisdom) will always pursue

luxury not understanding that which he pursues. Luxury costs more than simplicity, therefore he will soon be broke.

- **Frivolity**

19 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!²⁰ A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.²¹ To show partiality is not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.²² A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him. Proverbs 28:19-22

There is much to learn from these verses but the primary point for our consideration is that bread comes through hard work. But he who pursues things of no value or spends his day doing empty things will become impoverished. Many times, this kind of person thinks that he is working hard but in reality he has only persuaded himself. The bottom line is whatever task God has called you to (and we usually know what He has called us to do) do so by faith until your back is tired and it is time to lay down your head for the night.

- **Drunkenness and Gluttony**

17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day;¹⁸ For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off.¹⁹ Hear, my son, and be wise; And guide your heart in the way.²⁰ Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;²¹ For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. Proverbs 23:17-21; Proverbs 21:17; Proverbs 21:20

In the Scriptures, a drunkard is not someone who drinks more than one beer nor is a glutton one who has second helpings. A drunkard or a glutton is one who is consumed by an evil, corrupt, orgiastic pursuit of his cravings. We can see in many places where God blesses a feast of food and drink. Eating and drinking until you are full is not gluttony or drunkenness. Again we see here a very fine line on which we tread. Those who demand from the temporal that which only the eternal can provide are corrupt and will come to rags.

- **Sleep**

13 Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread. Proverbs 20:13

We come to another fine line to consider. Sleep is a mandatory creature-comfort. In many places in the Scriptures we learn that the sleep of the righteous is sweet and profitable but for the wicked they toil all night long. After you have worked all day long, God has built us with the need to lay down our heads. It can be very enjoyable and we can even look forward to resting. But here we are warned about an improper love of sleep such that we again are consumed by it and our understanding of this blessing is out of line with the Scriptures. A man who is slothful will squander that which he has and this verse commands him to get up and (implicitly) plow his field so that he can make bread.

- **Sexual Immorality**

10 Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors go to the house of a foreigner; Proverbs 5:10

26 For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Proverbs 6:26

3 Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, But a companion of harlots wastes his wealth. Proverbs 29:3

We have seen time after time that those who do not have their sexual lives under control come to ruin. There are great economic consequences to this kind of sin as well as the emotional and even eternal consequences. Sexual immorality is a trap that can destroy an otherwise faithful life and we should be on our guard to stay far from it.