**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**8/27/2023**

**The Pursuit of Riches**

Consider with me two imaginary men, both in pursuit of riches. The first man is pursuing material riches. His goal in life is to be a multi-millionaire, to live in luxury, for people to look upon him as highly successful. This is that for which he lives his life. The second man is in pursuit of spiritual riches. His goal in life is to be rich toward God, to be rich in faith, to be rich in spiritual blessings. Paul said in 2 Cor. 8:9, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* This is talking about Jesus coming to this earth to die for us, but He did not come to this earth to die for us so we could be rich materially. He came that we might be rich spiritually. In Revelation 2:8-9 it says, *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)...”* Here are rich poor people. They are poor materially, but they are rich spiritually. James says in James 2:5, *“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?”*

The first man is pursuing material riches and the second man is pursuing spiritual riches. It is possible for a man to be rich in both, but it is not possible for a man to PURSUE riches in both. Let me say that again. A person may be rich in both, but he cannot PURSUE both. Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters...”* He said, *“You cannot serve God and mammon,”* mammon meaning earthly riches (Matt. 6:24). And so a choice has to be made. Which will I pursue in life – material wealth or spiritual wealth?

Let us talk about our first man. In his pursuit of material riches there are considerable sacrifices involved. He must be away from his family a great deal in his pursuit of riches. He misses out on seeing his children grow up because he is away so much. And he might move into a city that he doesn’t really want to move his family into, and his family doesn’t want to move there, but a company made him an offer that he just couldn’t turn down. And since his pursuit is a pursuit of material riches, of course he will accept that offer. He just couldn’t turn it down. He may pay for his riches with his health. In his pursuit of riches he doesn’t eat properly, and maybe he is sleep deprived. He may have considerable anxieties and stress that’s hard on his health. Obviously he doesn’t read his Bible and pray very often. Now he may attend the services of a church somewhere on Sunday, but his pursuit is not serving God. This man makes a lot of sacrifices in order to obtain this material wealth he is seeking.

Also our second man must make considerable sacrifices. The Lord never hid the fact that if one was going to serve Him it would involve considerable sacrifice on his part. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”* One who desires to be rich spiritually must deny himself. He must renounce his aims, his purposes, his ambitions, his feelings, his plans and desires for the Lord. He must take up his cross and follow Jesus. To take up his cross means to take on suffering and even death if necessary. Jesus goes on to say in this passage, *“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?”* Yes, serving the Lord and obtaining heavenly riches involves considerable sacrifice.

I know of a young single man in his late twenties who had a job at a bank, making good money. His pursuit was to make lots of money. But, he repented, turned to the Lord and began pursuing spiritual riches. He gave up his lucrative banking job to go and work with a small church in their efforts to preach the gospel. He supported himself by working in construction and throwing newspapers, making a little more than minimum wage. Did serving the Lord cost him something? Yes, there is a price to pay when we choose to serve God.

And so whether you are pursuing material riches or you are pursuing spiritual riches it involves a considerable sacrifice on your part.

Now consider this contrast. The person who is pursuing material riches will find disappointment, and the one pursuing spiritual riches will find happiness.

The reason the one pursuing material riches is going to find disappointment is there are some things money cannot buy. Money cannot buy happiness. Money cannot buy contentment. It cannot buy peace. It cannot buy faith. It cannot buy love. It cannot buy hope. Money cannot buy these things.

So here is a person and his whole life is on pursuing material riches and when he gets it he doesn’t find the satisfaction that he thought he would find. King Solomon dealt with this. Solomon was a very wealthy man. 1 Kings 10:21 says, *“All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.”* Verse 23 says, *“So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.”* I understand Solomon to be the writer of Ecclesiastes. He talked about his possessions and wealth in chapter 2 verse 4-10. He said in verse 10, *“Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.”* Solomon pursued wealth and he got it. Solomon, what is your conclusion about all your wealth? Look at verse 11, *“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”*

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if all of us could learn from others? Here is the wisest man on earth, and he has accumulated more riches than all the kings of the earth and yet he says, “all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” In chapter 12 verse 13-14, Solomon, after pursuing wealth, pleasure and wisdom gives us the conclusion. He says, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”*

I want to ask you a question. Have you ever found yourself looking at the wealthy with a degree of envy? Have you ever said of one who is rich, “Ah he’s got it made. Wouldn’t you like to have what he has?” We probably all have said something like that. A question that many people have is, “Why to the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer?” A lot of people have trouble with that. Look with in Psalm 73. The writer of this Psalm has that very question in mind. Look at verses 2-3, *“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”*  In verse 5 he says concerning the wicked, *“They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men.”* The Psalmist is admitting that he almost gave up his confidence and trust in God when he saw the wicked prospering. When he saw that they don’t have troubles like other men. But look at verse 15 beginning, *“If I had said, ‘I will speak thus,’ Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me- Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.”* He says, I went into the sanctuary of God, then I realized God has them on a slippery slope. They don’t have it as good as I thought they did. They will be brought to desolation.

I want to emphasize here that we are talking about the materially rich who PURSUE riches, not just those who are rich. I’m talking about those who have made the obtaining of material riches a primary goal in their life. They will be brought to desolation. Many of them are miserable in this life because their wealth can’t buy them happiness, peace and love, and if they persist in their pursuit of riches they will surely be brought to destruction beyond this life.

Contrast that with the man who PURSUES spiritual riches. This man will find happiness, because he has what money cannot buy. He has contentment. He has peace with God. He has hope of eternal life. He has the association with the best people on earth, other Christians who are also pursuing spiritual riches. Now, not everything goes his way. He has bumps and bruises in life like everyone else does, but he has that which sustains him through all those bumps and bruises. He has faith in God, a God who will never leave him nor forsake him. Here is a person who has true happiness, because happiness is not found in what you have, happiness is found in what you are. He is truly rich, regardless of how much material things he may possess.

What happens when these two men die?

Concerning the first man, he leaves it all behind. All he has pursued will be left here. He can’t take it with him. 1 Timothy 6:7 says, *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”* In Luke 12 Jesus tells a story about a farmer whose ground brought forth plentifully. The farmer built new barns to store his crops and goods and he said to his soul, *“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”* He though he had it made in life. But look at verse 20, *“But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'”*  You have stored it all up. This has been your pursuit. Now, whose will it be? He probably will leave it for his children to fuss and quarrel about, and he will face a God in judgment whom he has not pursued. Here is a man who has spent his whole life pursuing material riches. He’s made all kinds of sacrifices, but it does not bring him the joy and happiness that he thought it would bring him, and when he dies he has nothing awaiting him over there except torment, and everything he has accumulated here is left to be eventually burned up when this world comes to an end. That dear friend is a sad story.

Well, what about the man who has spent his life pursuing spiritual riches? He has eternal happiness because he is going to the place where his riches are. Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* In pursuing spiritual riches he has laid up for himself treasures in heaven. Those treasures are secure. Moth and rust do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal. His heart is there and that is where he will go. He has contentment, peace, love, joy, hope here, and after death he will be able to enjoy his treasures for all eternity. That, my friends is a happy story.

The choice is ours. Which one are you pursuing?

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