

1 September 2013

## God's Riches are a sign of His Favour (Money & Riches Pt 4)

This is our fourth study on the topic of money and riches. In our previous study we covered four points; (1) the rich often do not want to know (or hear) about the poor, and (2) the rich often mock the poor, and (3) the rich are loved by their friends, but the poor are hated of their neighbours, and (4) the rich persecute the poor in their pride. This study will cover three points; (1) God bestowed physical riches on Israel as a sign of His favour, and (2) Christ challenged trusting in physical riches for salvation, and (3) God's riches at Christ's expense are a sign of God's favour today.

Let us add a little more detail to our points: -

### 1. God bestowed physical riches on Israel as a sign of His favour

Deut. 29: 9 *Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them that ye may prosper in all ye do.*

See also; Deut.11: 27 & 29, 28: 12, Isa 45:3, 48: 17, Prov.28: 27 & 2Kgs 20:13

The Jew requires a sign from God before he believes God (see 1Cor.1: 22), before he knows that what is taking place is ordained by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When he reads his Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) he finds that His God laid out blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. The land of Canaan, which although was a promise to their father Abraham, was seen as a blessing (see Deut.11: 27, 31), as was food in their storehouses (see Deut.28: 8). And when the people were removed from the land, it was a sign that God had removed His favour.

The Lord blessed some of the Patriarchs like Solomon with many physical riches (see 2Chron.1: 11 & 12), which would have been a sign to him and the children of Israel that their God was with him. Hence the Old Testament Jew generally sees a correlation between his riches, his possessions, and his favour with God Almighty. And today there are those in many North American 'Mega' churches like *Victory Christian Centre* in Oklahoma, and *Destiny Church* in New Zealand that encourage their congregations to tithe more, with the promise of God's blessing as a sign of the Lord's divine favour (see Mal.3: 10). And in *some* respects that appears to follow the New Testament teaching that "you reap what you sow" (see 2Cor.9: 6). Hence, you have a prosperity doctrine, which often sees the Pastor get rich and the poor of his flock get poorer.

Is this Bible doctrine for today?

What did the Lord Jesus teach when He walked the earth?

Let us look at our next two points to answer these questions:

### 2. Christ challenged trusting in physical riches for salvation

Mk 10:23 & 24 *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*

The issue with money is not that it is money, but that we love riches; hence the root of *all* evil is not money, but the *love* of money (see 1Tim.6: 20). And the reason it is so hard for a rich man to enter into heaven is not because he is rich, but because he trusts in his riches and struggles to let them go, and *solely* trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ to get to heaven, and then to daily trust in Christ for his needs.

If you have a corrupt version of the Holy Scriptures check our verses from Mk.10: 23 & 24 and see whether you can see the subtle manipulation of God's words in verse 24. The question in verse 23 is similar, where the Lord asked the question: *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

Now lets turn to verse 24:-

NIV says "The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, 'Children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!'"

Holy Scripture says "*And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*"

The NIV has changed much of verse 24, but the words "trust in riches" has been deleted. And we know that salvation is by faith, or trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the struggle for a rich man is to turn from "trusting in riches" to trusting in Christ. That subtle change to what God said is no different to how Satan changed God's words when he deceived Eve in Gen.3: 1-6.

So when someone tells you that all Bible versions are the same, encourage them to look up this verse. The evidence from this verse that they are not the same, *should* prove that the 200 plus versions are different in words and meaning, and therefore different in doctrine. If you remove or change the words "trusting in riches" you delete the reference to the rich man's struggle to trust in Christ, instead of his riches.

Jesus continued in verse 25 with; *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.* This verse challenges the Jewish mindset that God showed His favour on His people by riches. Clearly the disciples felt challenged by the Lord Jesus' teaching, because the surrounding verses say they were *astonished* at His words. The disciples asked Jesus, "who then can be saved?" And the Lord Jesus replies "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Do you know any seriously rich people? Is it because God has blessed them, or because they have worked hard and reaped physical wealth from what they have sown? And after all their hard work of sowing (to build their wealth), their joy, happiness, peace, and security are founded on their riches. How hard would it be for them to turn from *trusting* in their wealth to *trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ? As hard as it is for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle...it is impossible! But with God it is possible, providing they deny themselves and give their money to the poor (which releases their trust in it), take up their cross and follow the Lord Jesus (see Mk.10: 21). And if you are not convinced yet that the corrupt versions of Holy Scripture change the words, then look up your NIV in Mk.10: 21. It removes the words "take up the cross". So the rich man when he has given away his money, according to the NIV, has to follow the Lord Jesus without taking up his cross. Perhaps this is why there are rich men who go to church, read their NIV, continue to trust in their riches, do not take up their cross, yet call themselves Christians. In answer to our question, what did the Lord Jesus Christ teach? we say, the Lord Jesus taught that a rich man was not to *trust* in uncertain riches, but *trust* in Christ. And for a rich man, trusting in the Lord Jesus was like passing a camel through the eye of a needle, it is impossible, hence He challenged His disciples not to *trust* in physical riches for their salvation.

### 3. God's riches at Christ's expense are a sign of His favour today

2Cor 8:9 *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

See Eph.3: 8

Our verse in 2Corinthians explains the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ giving up His riches to be poor, that we might be rich. Hence when preachers refer to grace as "God's riches at Christ's expense", they are being true to the meaning that Scripture provides for grace. Such grace, where the believer becomes spiritually rich, is explained in Scripture as the unsearchable riches of Christ (see Eph.3: 8) which are also called exceeding riches (Eph.2: 7). And that spiritual richness is available to every man when he trusts not in uncertain riches, nor in the things of this world, but in the cross, where we see the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whosoever gives up what he trusts in, and trusts in the Son of God receives God's riches at Christ's expense.

In our verse from 2Corinthians chapter 8 Paul teaches the church that Christ was once rich (when He was with the Father in heaven), yet for our sakes He became poor (when He went to the cross), that we through His poverty might be rich. Think about that for the next 25 years!

Could you imagine being Bill Gates, with a net worth of U\$67B and giving away one million to 67,000 people, that in him becoming poor, those 67, 000 people would be rich? The Lord Jesus did not only ask the rich man to give *all* he had away to the poor, but He was also the perfect example, where He gave up *all* his heavenly riches, that could never be measured in dollar terms, and came down to earth to be poor. He was mocked by His own people, put on a cross, and then His Father turned His head away when His Son needed Him most (see Matt.27: 46), and He bore our sins on Himself (see 1Pet.2: 24). He was obedient to the Father, even unto death that we would be spiritually rich, beyond the richest millionaire or billionaire.

And remember, every Christian has these spiritual riches as a sign of God's favour upon them. Now that is what I call *true* riches, and is worth talking to everyone about, whether they be rich or poor, that they would have an opportunity to know and trust in the certainty of spiritual riches. For no other prophet, no man-made religion offers such riches at God's expense. Such spiritual riches, *not* physical riches, are a sign of God's favour today.

Let each one of us first ask God for understanding of this truth for ourselves, and then give us the grace and wisdom to share it with those who are both rich and poor, that everyone we meet would hear that Christ was once rich, yet He became poor, that all might be rich at His expense, as a sign of God's favour today.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our fourth study on the topic of riches and money, we have established three points; (1) God bestowed physical riches on Israel as a sign of His favour, and (2) Christ challenged trusting in physical riches for salvation, and (3) God's riches at Christ's expense are a sign of God's favour today.