

BEING WEALTHY

Having Plenty of Things to "USE"

- **chrema** - (plural) riches, money [whatever one can "use"] (Mark 10:23; Luke 18:24; and elsewhere)
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Mark 10:23 - It will be hard for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:24 - It is hard for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

How much is "enough"? Most people say, "Just a little bit more." Few say, like Paul did, that they are content in whatever circumstances they find themselves (Philippians 4:11 and elsewhere).

Don't ask yourself whether or not you consider yourself "wealthy." Don't compare yourself with some rich person you know. Instead, focus on just yourself. Look around you. Do you have lots of things that you *cannot* enter the kingdom of God. But you need to give thought to how serious this matter really is - how easily the things you "use" can crowd the kingdom out of your life. You may worship God in a "church" one day of the week... but who (or what) do you worship the rest of the week? If you claim it is God, is it obvious to other people? If not, then you may be deceiving yourself. Even if you could gain the whole world, would it be worth it? In these passages, it seems that the rich young ruler loved his "things" too much to change his ways. This is an example to *not* follow!

TO THINK ABOUT:

In the context of these passages, the rich young ruler was told that he needed to give away his riches - the things he was accustomed to "using," if he wanted to inherit eternal life. This is not always the case, but when such things receive more attention and time than God does, there may be no other recourse. Jesus wasn't "glorifying" poverty when he said this; rather, he was telling the young man to get rid of *everything* that had become like an idol to him - things that had taken over the place of God in his life. The man left filled with grief and sadness, for he knew that Jesus had spoken to the very heart of the matter. He was breaking the very first of the 10 Commandments.

How does one objectively evaluate himself? As James says, he can look into the "mirror of truth" (compare to James 1:21-26). But doing so has a danger. The Word of God can save your soul (verse 21), but - when you ignore it - it can also condemn you. The same Word that brings life to one person (he who hears and obeys) brings death to another (he who ignores it). *The Bible is not a toy. Reading it can be very dangerous, because it requires you to change!*

You will benefit greatly from reading and studying the Word (if you do as it says, of course) and focusing on what it says about riches, contentment, generosity, helping others, greed and idolatry, etc. Of course, you will want to look at the passages that describe wealth as being a blessing from God. But you need to also consider the effects of sin on the heart: it turns what is a blessing into a curse, if it is not "crucified" in Christ (Galatians 2:20). God did not give you the blessing of wealth - or any other blessing, for that matter - so that you could live for yourself. He gave it to you so that you could live for God and could be a blessing to others. Don't forget it! (If you do, you will receive an unpleasant reminder about it, at the Day of Justice.)

For those of you who do not have wealth (or "many things" to use), remember that you also have the ability to sin. You cannot point an accusing finger at the rich without also condemning yourself. How often are you jealous that they have more than you do? Are you content? Do you live for God any more than they do? Remember that Paul wasn't content only when he had "plenty," but also when he was impoverished (Philippians 4:11-12). God may be able to use the rich, if they have a repentant heart, to accomplish certain things for the kingdom of God. But he may be able to use you better, if you also have a repentant heart. Remember that God's strength is *best* seen in weakness (consider 1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Finally, if you believe you are being "oppressed and persecuted" by the rich, remember that the Day of Justice is inescapable for all of us. Pray for them, that they may become ready for it (Matthew 5:44-45).

[A question for both rich and poor - those with plenty and those in need.] If you are a genuine disciple of Jesus, God has given you the ability to show love and kindness to others. Are you doing so? How can you improve? If you need to improve in this matter, start reading the New Testament and looking for examples and commands which apply to you. (Some Old Testament passages, such as the Proverbs, may also prove helpful.) Some things will apply more to the rich, some more to the poor, but something exists that will apply to *each* of us.

The Bible is DANGEROUS!

The Bible is not merely something to believe;
It is something to be submitted to.

We are hopelessly lost without it;
But we face a dangerous peril with it:

For if it doesn't break us and change us,
It will harden us.

Even people who claim to agree with the Bible can become hardened against it - and not even know it - if they fail to make a conscious effort to put it into practice.

My people come to you, as they always do. They sit before you and hear your words, but they do not obey them. With their mouths they express love, but in their hearts they chase after selfish gain. To them, you are nothing more than a singer of love songs who has a beautiful voice, or a musician who plays an instrument well. They hear your words but do not obey them. Ezekiel 33:31-32