

Our new perspective

In 323 BC Alexander the Great was the wealthiest man on earth, humanly speaking. He had the treasures of Egypt's fabled Pharaohs, the glorious gold of Babylon, all the immense riches of the plundering Assyrians and the vast hoarded jewels of Persia. He had it all.

In a drinking contest with his generals outside of the conquered city of Babylon he downed 5 quarts of wine, fell into a fever and gradually died in delirium. Late one of his last nights he rolled from his cot in the military tent he slept in, crawled to the Euphrates river and tried to drown himself. His wife dragged him back from this attempt at immortalizing himself as a god.

Historians have recorded that Alexander commanded as his last request that he be buried with his hands through his coffin showing they were empty and took nothing with him. All rich and poor of all time have equally taken nothing with them, except what they sent ahead or took in their heart. Listen to how one poet captured this reality in the poem "What want I more".

In the heart of London city,
 Midst the dwellings of the poor,
 These bright golden words were spoken –
 I have Christ what want I more.
 Spoken by a woman, dying on a garret floor,
 Having not one earth's possession, I have Christ what want I more.
 He who heard her ran to fetch her
 something from the earth's great store,
 It was useless died she saying, I have Christ what want I more.
 Look away from earth's attractions friend,
 Their joys will soon be o'er.
 Rest not 'til thy heart exclaimeth,
 I have Christ what want I more!

The book of James confronted the 1st church of Jerusalem's members with a call to looking at life differently. It was all about how having Christ was all they really needed!
 Note James 1:9-11 as I read:

The **BENEFITS** of Poverty
The **DANGERS** of Wealth
The **FALSE PROMISES** of Possessions

I. The **BENEFITS** of Poverty

- **GOD REVEALS HIS GLORY TO THE POOR** **Isaiah 66:1-2** Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? 2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.
- **JESUS BECAME POOR FOR US** **2 Corinthians 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.
- **GOD HAS CHOSEN THE POOR TO BE RICH** **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?

II. **BIBLICAL CAUSES POVERTY**

1. **LAZINESS** **Proverbs 6:10-11** A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep— 11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler [unexpected], And your need like an armed man [unrestrained].
2. **STINGINESS** **Proverbs 11:23-24** The desire of the righteous is only good, But the expectation of the wicked is wrath. 24 There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty.
3. **STUBBORNNESS** **Proverbs 13:18** Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, But he who regards a rebuke will be honored. [One who can't work for a boss, they have to be in charge]
4. **INDOLENCE** **Proverbs 20:13** Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.
5. **INDULGENCE** **Proverbs 23:21** For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.
6. **SLOTHFULNESS** **Proverbs 24:34** So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.
7. **FOOLISHNESS** **Proverbs 28:19** He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! [Get rich quick schemes]
8. **IMPATIENCE** **Proverbs 28:22** A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

III. The Dangers of Wealth

- A. **OFTEN THE WEALTHY ARE POOR TOWARD GOD** Luke 12:16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.
- B. **OFTEN THE WEALTHY MISS SALVATION** Luke 18:24-25 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
- C. **OFTEN THE WEALTHY ARE HARDHEARTED** James 5:1-5 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.

IV. The False Promises of Possessions

Americans buy \$1300 on credit for every \$1000 they make. We're going deeper and deeper in debt. Most of the debt we get into is not caused by our needs, it's caused by our wants. We get an epidemic of "wantiteis". I see it and I want it. We need to learn to control your wants! Why do I always want more? Even when I don't have the money, what motivates me to live beyond my means? Why are we rarely satisfied with what we have and we spend ourselves into debt? It's because of three common misconceptions. If we know the truth, the truth sets you free.

- **FALSE PROMISE: Happiness comes in having more possessions.**

We think that. We believe that. No society has as much *stuff* as we do. We've all got lots of stuff and we fill our homes with stuff. Technology has produced more and more products and advertising comes along and tells us we've got to have it to really live! The average high school student, by the time they graduate, has seen 350,000 commercials and they are all saying, "Buy my stuff!" What is the basic message of advertising? You can buy happiness! We think having more things will make me more happy.

- Eccl. 5:10- 11 *"He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness! The more you have, the more you spend"*
- Eccl. 6:9 *"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."* Less expensive too! Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do without!

- **FALSE PROMISE: Importance comes in having more possessions.**

We get the concept that I am what I own, that my valuables determine my value, if I only have a little then I must just be worth a little. If I want to be liked, respected, looked up to, then I've got to keep in this constant acquisition of getting more and more -- "Keeping up with the Jones".

Luke 12:15 *"Be on your guard against greed in any shape or form. For a man's real life in no way depends on the number of his possessions."* Don't confuse your net worth with your self worth. Your value is not based on your valuables. *"Be on your guard"* -- continually ask yourself tough questions. Am I expecting things to make me happy? Am I expecting things to make me feel important?

- **FALSE PROMISE: Security comes in having more possessions.**

If I get more things then I'll be more secure. Then I'll secure that ultimate goal of financial independence. I've noticed that the more possessions I have the more I have to worry about.

- Proverbs 11:28 *"Those who depend on their wealth will fall like the leaves of autumn."* Proverbs 11:28 He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage.
- Proverbs 18:18 (Living Bible) *"The rich man thinks of his wealth as an impregnable defense, a high wall of safety. What a dreamer!"*

How many ways can you loose everything over night? Many. If you're going to have security you must put your security in something that ultimately cannot be taken from you. You can have it all and loose it overnight.

We become possessed by our possessions. If you own something that God told you to give away right now and you don't give it away, you don't own it -- it owns you. You are a slave to your own possessions. The problem is with things that the more you get the more they have to be maintained. You've got to polish them and repair them, paint them, prune them, redecorate. People will sacrifice all kinds of things, even relationships, for things.

We have three misconceptions: having more things will make me more happy; having more things will make me more important; having more things will make me more secure. None of that is true. It just isn't true.

HOW DO YOU ENJOY LIFE MORE ON LESS?

A. We will find true happiness in helping others.

1. **HAPPINESS COME FROM GIVING!** Not in things, not in possessions, not in pleasures, bank accounts, gold cards, but in helping others. Acts 20:35 *"Jesus said, `There's more happiness in giving than in receiving'".* The people who don't know that verse are the people who have never tried it. That is a

universal principle. We know lots of people sitting in homes filled with beautiful possessions and they're lonely and unhappy. Things do not give lasting happiness. It's a trap, the Bible says. Last week Bonnie and I learned about an orphanage in Peru run by a businessman from Michigan. He was a successful man who sold his home and moved with his wife and seven children to the orphanage to live in poverty with thirty orphans. You won't find a guy happier than this guy. He's doing what God made him to do.

2. **MATERIALISM GETS BORING.** The most bored people in the world are people who can afford anything. Because there is no challenge. They've got it all and they say, "So what? So what if I spend \$50,000 a day on nothing."

B. **We find our true self-worth in knowing God.**

1. **GOD SAYS WE ARE PRECIOUS TO HIM.** Isaiah 43:4 *"God says, `You are precious in my sight!'"* Circle "precious" -- that's what God thinks about you. That's the basis for real self worth. What does God think of you? You are uniquely created by God. When I am insecure and don't feel good about me, when I'm feeling inferior, I have to have status symbols to prop me up. I have to wear a certain kind of clothes. I have to drive a certain kind of car. I have to have the names of products on my shoes and shirt because I think that if these products are OK then I must be OK. I've got to have certain symbols that I can depend on to make me feel good because inside I don't feel good. When you really understand how much God loves you, that you matter to God, that you are significant to Him, that you're not here on this earth by accident, that He put you here for a purpose, then all of a sudden you are released and don't have to prove yourself with products -- status symbols that make me feel good. Your self worth is based on what God says about you, not about what you say about yourself or what other people or some product name I have on my shirt in order to make me feel cool.
2. **GOD SAYS HE WILL CARE FOR US.** Matthew 6:26 *"Your heavenly Father feeds the birds. Are you not more valuable than they?"* Of course you're more valuable than they are! You matter to God. If God takes care of the birds, He's going to take care of you. So you don't have to sweat it!

C. **We find our true security in trusting God.**

1. **GOD SAYS WE CAN NEVER LOSE HIS PRESENCE.** Hebrews 13:5 (Good News) *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, `I will never leave you nor abandon you.'"* This says keep your lives free from the love of money. God says, "I'm with you and I have everything so I'm all you need." Which would give you a greater sense of security? Knowing that you had \$200,000 in the bank or knowing that God has promised to provide for every one of your needs?

- (1) Which of those two do you think are more dependable?
- (2) Which of those two do you think can never be taken away from you?
- (3) Which of those two is going to be lasting even 100 years from now?

Nothing can separate you from God's love. If you're going to be secure, you've got to put your security, not in your bank account, but you put your security in something that cannot ever be lost. Whether the bank account is lost or not, whether America goes into a gigantic depression or not or the place is bombed -- whatever. Your security is in God.

2. **GOD HAS THE BEST RETIREMENT PLAN.** Matthew 6:19, 21 *"Don't store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in Heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* He's saying you establish a nest egg for eternity. That's real security. Lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth where moths and rust corrupt. Today, if Jesus were telling this in modern day language he's say, where depreciation and inflation corrupt -- things that can eat away at your savings.

- (1) Notice this verse does not say "Don't save". You ought to save. Jesus commended investment. The Bible commands it. The first verse we read said, *"The wise man saves for the future, the foolish man spends whatever he gets."* You ought to save. This verse is not prohibiting savings. Circle the phrase "for yourselves". *"Don't store up for yourselves treasure on earth."* Don't hoard for personal indulgence. Don't keep on saving just so you can brag about how much you've got and so you can blow it on every little whim. At the end of life the ultimate question that God asks you is not "How much have you got?" but "How much have you given?"
- (2) How do you store up treasure in Heaven? By investing in people who are going there. You cannot take it with you. When Alexander the Great died, he commanded that he be buried with his hands sticking out of the coffin openhanded so people could see that you can't take it with you. But you can send it on ahead.
- (3) Are you storing up any treasure in heaven? When you get there how much is going to be stored up? You're going to spend a lot more time on that side of eternity than you do on this side. Invest in people.
- (4) Giving is the antidote to materialism. That's it. It's the only antidote to materialism. It teaches me to give away. The acid test of "Am I materialistic?" is "How easy can I give away?" How generous am I? -- When people start talking about giving, do you get irritated? Some of you are irritated right now! Do you get nervous when people ask you for money? That is a symptom for what is really important in my life. Store up treasure in heaven.
- (5) The most sensitive nerve in our body is the nerve that goes from the brain to the pocketbook. Yet that is the acid test of "Am I materialistic or not?" is look at my giving. How much do I hold on to and how much do I give away? When I am generous, when I hold everything I have with an open hand, then that is saying, "I trust you, God. I don't have to hoard anything. If I give it all away today, God will provide it back tomorrow."

I PETER 1:4	TRUE WEALTH
GOD'S	MAN'S
INCORRUPTIBLE	ROTTING
UNDEFINED	SPOTTED
UNFADING	FADED
RESERVED	LOST

The church's neglect of Amos¹ might be understandable if we lived in a world of little injustice, little poverty, and little misuse of wealth-or even if we lived in a world in which the conditions Amos speaks of were recognized but were gradually being righted. But this is not the case. In 1977 the National Academy of Science published a report saying that 750 million people in the poorest nations live in extreme poverty with incomes of less than seventy-five dollars per year. The United Nations' *Development Forum* reported in 1974 that "at least 460 million are actually starving." Roughly a billion persons, chiefly in third- and fourth-world countries, are malnourished. Yet in spite of efforts to deal with such great problems in some quarters, the gap between the rich and poor countries is widening as the years go by. In 1965 the per capita Gross National Product of developed countries was twelve times as large as that of developing countries taken as a group. But that figure has already increased, and it is predicted by Professor Bhagwati of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that the rich will have 15x the GNP by AD 2000.

1:9-11. Furthermore one who asks for wisdom needs to evidence hope. Whatever his social or economic position, the believer must see eternal advantages. The brother in humble circumstances can be glad in his high standing spiritually, and the one who is rich can be glad for his human frailty (knowing that he has "eternal glory" in Christ, 2 Cor. 4:17). Social prominence passes away, wealth withers away like a wild flower in the hot sun, and fame will fade. Hope in the eternal is evidence of believing faith.

TREASURES

One by one He took them from me,
All the things I valued most,
Until I was empty-handed;
Every glittering toy was lost.
And I walked earth's highway, grieving
In my rags and poverty,
Till I heard His voice inviting,
Lift your empty hands to Me!
Till I heard His voice inviting,
Lift your empty hands to Me!

So I held my hands toward heaven,
And He filled them with a store
Of His own transcendent riches,
Till they could contain no more.
And at that I comprehended
With my stupid mind and dull
That God could not pour His riches
Into hands already full.
That God could not pour His riches
Into hands already full.

¹ Boice, *Minor Prophets*, p. 133.

4434 ptochos { pto-khos' }

from **ptosso**, to crouch, akin to 4422 and the alternate of 4098; TDNT - 6:885,969; adj

AV - poor 30, beggar 2, poor man 1, beggarly 1; 34

GK - 4777 { ptwcoy" }

- 1) reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms
- 2) destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour
 - 2a) lowly, afflicted, destitute of the Christian virtues and eternal riches
 - 2b) helpless, powerless to accomplish an end
 - 2c) poor, needy
- 3) lacking in anything
 - 3a) as respects their spirit
 - 3a1) destitute of wealth of learning and intellectual culture which the schools afford (men of this class most readily give themselves up to Christ's teaching and proved them selves fitted to lay hold of the heavenly treasure)

For synonyms see entry 3993, **penes**.
See entry 5870 for comparison of synonyms.

3993 penes { pen'-ace }

from a primary peno (to toil for daily subsistence); TDNT - 6:37,824;

AV - poor 1; 1

GK - 4288 { pevnh" }

- 1) poor

5870 Synonyms

See Definition for penes 3993

See Definition for ptochos 4434

- 3993 - one who is so poor he earns his bread by daily labour
4434 - one who only obtains his living by begging²

Rich & Poor equal in redemption **Exodus 30:15** "The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves.

Corners for poor **Leviticus 19:10** 'And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.

God's goal to have no poverty **Deuteronomy 15:4-11** "except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance—5 "only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.6 "For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

7 "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,8 "but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.9 "Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you.10 "You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.11 "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

God said no oppression poor **Deuteronomy 24:14** "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates.

God makes rich & poor **1 Samuel 2:7** The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.

GIVE GIFTS TO THE POOR Esther 9:21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar,

GOD WATCHES OVER POOR Psalm 9:18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten; The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.

BLESSED IF HELP THE POOR Psalm 41:1 Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Psalm 49:6-20

6 Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,

7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
8 For the redemption of their souls is costly,
And it shall cease forever—
9 That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.
10 For he sees wise men die;
Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever,
Their dwelling places to all generations;
They call their lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain;
He is like the beasts that perish.
13 This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
Death shall feed on them;
The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave,
For He shall receive me. Selah
16 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away;
His glory shall not descend after him.
18 Though while he lives he blesses himself
(For men will praise you when you do well for yourself),
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see light.
20 A man who is in honor, yet does not understand,
Is like the beasts that perish.

Psalm 82:1-8 God stands in the congregation of the mighty;
He judges among the gods.

2 How long will you judge unjustly,
And show partiality to the wicked? Selah
3 Defend the poor and fatherless;
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.
4 Deliver the poor and needy;
Free them from the hand of the wicked.
5 They do not know, nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are unstable.
6 I said, "You are gods,
And all of you are children of the Most High.
7 But you shall die like men,

And fall like one of the princes.”

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.

MOCKING POOR EQUALS MOCKING GOD Proverbs 17:5 He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

LENDING TO POOR EQUALS LENDING TO GOD Proverbs 19:17 He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.

CHRIST MINISTERED TO POOR Matthew 11:5 “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Matthew 19:23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

OBSTACLE TO CONVERSION Luke 18:24-25 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!25 “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

PROOF OF CONVERSION Luke 19:8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

2 Corinthians 9:8-15 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.9 As it is written:

“He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Galatians 2:10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

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?

JESUS PREACHED TO POOR Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

INVITE THE POOR TO PARTIES & FEASTS Luke 14:13-14, 21 "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.¹⁴ "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." ²¹ "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'