

Christian Ethics

The Ethics of Wealth: Obtaining,
Possessing, and Using

The existence of wealth poses many questions

- If God made it—and He did: Genesis 2.11; Psalm 24.1; Haggai 2.8
- Why does He seem to hate it so? Revelation 18.1-20
- Why are some individuals rich, and others poor?
- Why are some nations rich, and others poor?

- What is the responsibility of the rich towards the poor?
- Is it a proper role of human governments, to attempt to equalize wealth among the citizens of a nation?
- Is one economic system more Biblical than another? Can Biblical Christianity survive only in a Free Market society?

The Bible talks about wealth. A lot

- About 40% of Jesus' parables involve money
- About 10% of the Gospels talk about money: more than they talk about Heaven and Hell combined
- In the entire Bible, there are about 2000 references to wealth—for every reference to faith and prayer, there are two references to money and wealth

In short, the Bible is very clear that

- God cares very much how we use the things He gives us
- One of the very real—and very important—“litmus tests” of our faith is the way we use our wealth
- Luke 18.18-24
- Luke 19.1-9
- Christianity is the original “put your money where your mouth is” religion. II Cor. 8.8

So what's a Christian to do?

- Deuteronomy 8 provides the Biblical framework for thinking correctly about wealth
- Deuteronomy is written to the generation that survived 40 years in the wilderness
- The people who enter into the Promised Land have been waiting for this for over 600 years.
- The focus of the chapter is “Be careful”

8.1-6 Be careful to remember that God tests us with wealth

- 8.1: you are about to be rich—remember to obey
- 8.2-5: He brought poverty as a test of faith
- 8.5: So remember to obey, now that you are about to be rich

8.7-11 Be careful to remember that God is the ultimate source of wealth

- Human economic systems are about the production and distribution of wealth
- But the ultimate source of wealth is God
- And the very real danger is that rich people forget the God who gave it to them
- As is stated in verses like Amos 2.6; 4.1; 5.11; Isaiah 3.15-16

8.12-20 Be careful to remember that God can take it away as easily as He can give it

- 8.12-13: God talks about their wealth, and their work.
- 8.14-16: God talks about His work
- 8.17-18: God talks about the tendency to forget His work and focus on the product of their work
- 8.19-20: when that happens, He will take it away

So...

- Poverty and wealth have as their primary purpose the trial of our faith
- They are not rewards nor punishments, although poverty can be the punishment of disobedience.
- We want to always remember that God is active—every day—in the financial lives of His people.