

Poverty through Wealth

Psalm 49: 6-15

I think most would agree that a majority of cultures, especially in the west, are driven by the desire for wealth and social affluence. In our culture, wealth and affluence are glamorized on television, radio, internet, and through most marketing campaigns. These approaches lead one to believe that wealth and affluence are the solution to all our problems. These marketers portray happiness, health, and real life are obtained through added wealth.

I would hope most of us know better than that, and haven't bought into this campaign of deception. However, this attitude and pursuit has consumed humanity since the dawn of time. From all appearances revealed today, this pursuit will remain as long as men inhabit the earth. There is an insatiable appetite for more.

Our text deals with those who have placed their trust in wealth and what one can acquire in this life. The psalmist, although unnamed, extended an admonition for all to hear – low and high, rich and poor, all the inhabitants of the world. The Bible reveals many dangers regarding an appetite for wealth and affluence. [Mark 10:24 – 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!](#) [1 Tim.6:17 – Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.](#) As we discuss the [certainties](#) revealed in this psalm, I want to consider the thought: [Poverty through Wealth](#).

I. The Arrogance in Riches (6-9) – I do not believe the psalmist implies all who are wealthy fit this description, but unfortunately, many do. Consider:

A. The Vanity (6) – [They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.](#) The psalmist will go on to discuss several characteristics of many who are wealthy, but in this simple statement, he reveals their arrogance. (We will see this revealed in their attitudes in a moment.) These trust in their wealth, boasting in the abundance of their riches. They feel as if their money can purchase or secure whatever their hearts' desire. There is no mention of the favor or grace of God, just trust and hope in monetary gain. Their sole reason for rejoicing, and the one attribute they value most, is their wealth. (This is truly a sad state in which to live.)

B. The Inability (7-8) – [None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:](#) ^[8] [\(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.\)](#) Wealth and riches may

be able to purchase every material possession and pleasure known to man, but it cannot purchase redemption. Wealth can acquire a lot in this life, but it cannot secure peace with God or provide atonement for sin. Riches cannot reconcile the lost to a holy God. The redemption of souls is precious, literally *costly*. Even the richest of the world are unable to provide this costly gift. Only the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, giving His life blood to redeem and reconcile us to God, is worthy to purchase one's redemption!

C. The Reality (9) – *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.* The psalmist refers to the need of reconciliation to God in redemption through Christ to avoid eternal corruption and death. Money and social status will be unable to stay the hand of death. We all have an appointment with death, and our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ will determine where we spend eternity following our passing from this life in death. The rich and poor alike will face death and stand before the Lord in judgment. *Heb.9:27 – And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

II. The Apathy through Riches (10-13) – Here we discover the apathetic attitude of those who trust in riches rather than God. Consider:

A. Their Awareness (10) – *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.* The psalmist revealed the rich man's awareness of the brevity of life and the inability to take one's riches beyond the grave. Those who possessed great wealth had known of the wise and the fool alike departing in death. As these departed this life, their wealth, whatever it may have been, was left for someone else to spend and enjoy. There could be no doubt that these wealthy men knew these fundamental principles of life.

B. Their Defiance (11) – *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.* The psalmist had witnessed this scenario played out time and again. The rich and affluent were well aware that all men die, leaving their wealth to others, and yet many of them believed their situation would be different. Inwardly they believed their houses and land would continue forever, and the houses they had built would never rot or decay. They named their lands and possessions after themselves as a memorial to their wealth and perceived greatness.

- Men like this continue today. They feel as if somehow they are immune to the natural laws of man. They refuse to admit there would ever come a time when their wealth and influence were

not known and recognized among men. They go to great lengths to ensure their legacy is preserved and their name is remembered.

C. Their Ignorance (12-13) – Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish. ^[13] This their way *is* their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. The foolishness of their wealth and dependence upon self was speaking rather than the wisdom of God. The psalmist had witnessed this time and again, and the outcome was always the same. The rich and affluent died just like the poor and unknown. Soon enough their memory had vanished from the earth. These lived and died in deception, placing their faith and trust in riches, refusing to believe their lives would ever change or come to an end.

- Many today continue to fall victim to this folly. They may not have great material wealth, but most refuse to accept that they stand accountable to God. Most spend their youth in vanity and pride, failing to consider the eternal weight of the soul. We all have an appointed time when we will depart this life and stand before the righteous Creator and Judge.

III. The Appraisal of Riches (14-15) – While many failed to see life as it truly was, the psalmist saw life from an eternal perspective and was aware of the fleeting value of material wealth. He understood:

A. Riches cannot Prevent Death (14) – Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. The rich, just like the poor, would soon enough face the chilly grip of death. At that moment their riches would be unable to buy another moment of life. They may have enjoyed all the possessions and pleasures money could afford in this life, but their riches were of no value when it came time to die.

B. Riches cannot Preserve Beauty (14) – The rich and affluent often pride themselves on their personal appearance, having the ability to buy the best of everything. We see this in our culture as well. Many celebrities have spent enormous amounts of money seeking to preserve their youthful appearance. However, riches cannot preserve beauty forever. We live in a world cursed by sin, filled with disease, death, and decay. The way of the grave and the effects of death are the same for all, regardless of their wealth or social status. Real beauty is found within, not revealed by what riches can portray without.

C. Riches cannot Purchase Salvation (15) – [But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.](#) The psalmist may not have enjoyed riches in this life, but he possessed something far greater, something money could not buy. He was secure in the hand of God. What money could not secure, God was able to provide.

- Riches cannot purchase one's salvation. Money cannot deliver one from the power of death and the darkness of the grave. Eternal life and acceptance by God are available through faith in the finished work of Christ alone. In Christ we are promised eternal life, one day to be resurrected in life when the Lord comes for the church! I will never be rich by monetary standards, but I have wealth this world knows nothing of. I have treasure in Christ that is not subject to the ups and downs of market trends, and will never lose its value or disappear. I am redeemed by the blood of Christ, placed within His body, and guaranteed eternal life. I suppose you could say I'm rich!

Conclusion: This Old Testament saint lived prior to the life of Christ and His great sacrifice on the cross for our sin. Although he lived many years before Jesus shared great truth, the psalmist was well aware of a New Testament principle. [Matt.16:26 – For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?](#) I am thankful I know Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I am resting in Him rather than the riches of this world. What are you depending on in this life? Do you know Christ as your personal Savior?