

The modern lie about riches

Introduction

There is a tendency amongst Christians to believe that material success is a sign of God's favour; this is even true of those that oppose the prosperity 'gospel' of Word Faith false teachers. Time and again I hear people say that such and such a professing Christian must be blessed by God because they are rich; this is despite this person holding false views of the Gospel and other errors. Conversely, some feel that they are abandoned by God because they are poor or struggling to keep their heads above water.

It is time that we put paid to these false materialistic ideas. Far too many Christians have a very earthly understanding of God's blessing. The great mistake is to fail to understand that material blessings are a component of life in the new world and that blessing now, in this age, is chiefly spiritual and heavenly.

Now God may bless some people with material wealth according to his good pleasure, and that is always for a purpose and not for the enjoyment of the person blessed. Nevertheless, the main factors in the blessings attached to the Gospel are spiritual. More than that, God tells us that the path of the righteous is not wealthy, affluent, full of healing, or even well to do; it is full of tribulation, suffering and hardship. Look at these texts:

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?' Matt 16:24-26

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Jn 16:33

We told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened. 1 Thess 3:4

Share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God. 2 Tim 1:8

Now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes. 1 Pt 1:6-7

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings. 1 Pt 4:12-13

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Jm 1:2

Therefore, it behoves us to look at what God actually tells us about riches and poverty and also to look at the example set by Jesus and the apostles.

What does God think of rich people?

So the people went in and possessed the land ... And they took strong cities and a rich land, and possessed houses full of all goods, cisterns *already* dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against You, cast Your law behind their backs ... Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their enemies, who oppressed them. Neh 9:24-27

The rich man will lie down, but not be gathered *up*; He opens his eyes, and he *is* no more. Terrors overtake him like a flood; a tempest steals him away in the night. The east wind carries him away, and he is gone; It sweeps him out of his place. It hurls against him and does not spare; he flees desperately from its power. *Men* shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place. Job 27:19-23

He who oppresses the poor to increase his *riches*, and he who gives to the rich, *will surely come to poverty*. Prov 22:16

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. And again I say to you, 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'. Matt 19:23-24

He has filled *the* hungry with good things, and *the* rich He has sent away empty. Lk 1:53

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Lk 6:24

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'. But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. 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!' Lk 18:22-24

Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? Jm 2:6-7

Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you*! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 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. Indeed the wages of the labourers 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. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Jm 5:1-5

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1 Cor 1:27-28

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 1 Tim 6:17

What does God think of poor people

You shame the counsel of the poor, but the LORD *is* his refuge. Ps 14:6

You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor. Ps 68:10

The LORD hears the poor. Ps 69:33

He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor. Ps 72:4

He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. Ps 72:13

He sets the poor on high. Ps 104:41

I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; Yes, I will praise Him among the multitude. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* from those who condemn him. Ps 109:30-31

Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. Prov 31:9

The LORD has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it. Isa 14:32

The poor among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel. Isa 29:19

The poor have the gospel preached to them. Matt 11:5

Blessed *are you* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Lk 6:20

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. As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever'. 2 Cor 9:8-9

James, Cephas, and John ... *desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Gal 2:9-10

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? Jm 2:5

Interim conclusion

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament amply testify that God is for the poor and against the rich. The rich have their reward already in material goods (Lk 6:24) but the poor have been chosen to be rich in faith (Jm 2:5).

It is very difficult for rich people to be saved (Lk 18:22-24). Indeed God repeatedly says, 'Woe' to the rich (e.g. Lk 6:24). James tells the rich to 'weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!*' (Jm 5:1-5).

The reason for this lies in the electing purposes of God in eternity. Only those chosen by God in eternity are saved and God predestines all the circumstances of everyone's life at the same time. The poor are not saved because they are poor; being poor is not a prerequisite of salvation; it is just that God, in his wisdom, predestines that most of the elect are of a lowly background for their own good. The danger of riches is that they lead to moral complacency and a tendency to trust in your own strength. Thus few elect are rich because riches are a great temptation and God would spare his people that. Only a small minority of genuine Christians has been rich and God used these to fund missionary societies and charitable organisations. Though they were rich, they gave most of their money away.

Far from riches being a goal for Christians, they are a snare. The Bible nowhere tells believers to seek earthly, material riches but only treasure in heaven.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matt 6:19-21

Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'. Matt 19:21

What is focusing on riches?

Being rich in monetary terms or material possessions is laying up treasure on earth. When Word Faith false teachers tell gullible people that they can have anything they desire if they name it and claim it (an occult doctrine) or that they should be rich and healthy as a testimony to God, they are not only lying but they are directly telling people to lay up treasure on earth.

Now even the dumbest person on earth can see that this is directly contradictory to what Jesus commands:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Matt 6:19

But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Lk 12:20-21

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Col 3:2

Understanding the words of Jesus, the early church, at the height of its spiritual power, sold off excessive possessions and lands and gave the money to the apostles to feed the poor and widows.

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. Acts 2:44-45

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. Acts 4:34-35

As a result of this spurning of riches and charitable giving,
The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

Massive genuine church growth has vanished today; in the UK at least, evangelical churches are diminishing week by week. Some denominations are fast heading for extinction. At the same time as the diminution occurred, the churches got richer and richer with people pouring their money into material buildings and leadership affluence instead of giving to the poor. Could there be a connection?

In fact loving riches is a disease, an addiction that serves no good. The more riches one has, the less one is satisfied. How many vastly rich people have ended up committing suicide?

He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also *is* vanity. Eccles 5:10

In the end, the problem with riches is that they are a chief component of the world system. The world runs by money, money-based power and greed; this is behind all wars and

political strife. It is the oil that keeps the cogs of this evil world together and is the root of all evil.

The reason that we eschew riches is that we are dead to the world. We are commanded not to love the world; thus we are also commanded not to love money or seek riches.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. 1 Jn 2:15-16

Those who love the world cannot be true believers [‘If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him’].

Therefore seeking to be rich is not only contrary to God’s direct command but is also an allegiance with the evil world system. Those who teach that Christians should desire to be rich are in league with the world, and thus with Satan. They cannot be true believers.

There are two worlds; one is spiritual and heavenly, the domain of God. The other is material and earthly, the domain of sin. The earthly world runs by iniquity and is deeply rooted in money and riches; the spiritual world runs by grace and faith. You cannot be in both worlds at the same time. If you live by faith you will not be focused on money. If you are focused on riches, then you cannot have faith.

The example of Jesus

Despite the false propaganda of several Word Faith teachers, Jesus was manifestly poor. Note this; the representative of the sovereign God on earth, God’s only begotten Son, came to the earth as a poor man.

Paul states that Jesus was poor

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. 2 Cor 8:9

[He] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant. Phil 2:7

He had a poor birth

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Lk 2:7

He had a poor background

Jesus’ father was a carpenter, which was an honourable but lowly occupation. He also lived in Galilee, which was denigrated by the Jews in the south (Jn 7:45-52). When Solomon rewarded Hiram for his services with the gift of an upland plain among the mountains of Naphtali, with its cities, he was contemptuous calling it ‘the land of Cabul’ (1 Kg 9:13). The Jews called it Galil, which continued to be occupied by the original inhabitants, and hence came to be called ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ (Matt 4:15). Galilee was not an affluent area.

When it came for the sacrifice to be made for Jesus as an infant, Joseph could only afford one of the poorest sorts of offering (Lk 2:24).¹

¹ The offering was for the purification of Mary (Lev 12:2-8).

He lived a poor life

He was homeless

And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His*head'. Matt 8:20

He had no resources to pay his tax

Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you. Matt 17:27

He relied on the charity of friends and supporters

Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance. Lk 8:3

What about his seamless robe?

Word Faith teachers aver that the fact that Jesus owned a woven tunic without seams proved that he was wealthy enough to buy expensive clothing (Jn 19:23-24). This is spurious reasoning.

We already have clear statements that Jesus was not wealthy at all; we also have records showing that rich people sponsored Jesus and put him up in their homes. The tunic was simply a gift from a grateful rich person. This particular gift was necessary in order for prophecy to be fulfilled (Jn 19:24).

Word Faith teachers are really clutching at straws.

What is the goal for godly people?

God tells us to aspire to godly contentment

God does not tell us to seek either riches or poverty for some moral reason; rather he tells us to seek godly contentment in all circumstances. What does this mean?

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. Phil 4:11

'Content' here is *autarkes*, meaning: sufficient for one's self, strong enough or processing enough to need no aid or support; independent of external circumstances; contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 1 Tim 6:8

Let your conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'. Heb 13:5

'Content' in these is *arkeo*, meaning to be strong, to suffice, to ward off temptation and to be satisfied.

This needs no great exposition; everybody understands the meaning of contentment. It means not coveting something that we have not got and being satisfied with what we have. Paul considers that having food and clothing alone is enough to be contented with; having a home of your own is a bonus then.

Where do riches come from?

The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. 1 Sam 2:7

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Job 1:21

The blessing of the LORD makes *one* rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. Prov 10:22

As God is sovereign over all things, so he is sovereign over the distribution of wealth. Anyone who has money only has it because God has allowed him to have it on trust. Having wealth is an enormous responsibility because God expects it to be used for his glory and to alleviate the cause of the poor.

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God ... lest -- *when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them* ... and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied ... and you forget the LORD your God ... then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth'. ... you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth ... if you by any means forget the LORD your God ... I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. Deut 8:11-19

We can never say that our hard work has gained us wealth. Many people work very hard and are dirt poor. In fact today, in this evil fiat-money society where debt rules, rich people (notably 'banksters') get much richer by doing nothing or by taking risks with interest free money.

People who use wealth for selfish or evil means are storing up for themselves wrath in the Day of Judgment. Note the story of the rich man in Luke 16.

Forsaking riches: examples

Abraham

When Abram was called by God he clearly was a man of some substance, but he chose to leave all the advantages of living in one of the greatest cities at the time and wander in a foreign land as a shepherd / herdsman.

When it was necessary to separate the flock from his nephew Lot, Abraham allowed Lot to chose the best lands (Gen 13:9-11). Having eschewed material riches, God promised Abraham spiritual wealth (Gen 13:14-17 with Heb 11:9-10; Gen 15:1).

The pioneer of faith in the OT left the material luxury of Ur and lived in tents all his life. Though he had large herds, flocks and money, he had few material possessions. He used his money in God's service and did not spend it upon luxuries for himself.

Moses

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. Heb 11:24-26

Having the choice between living as a prince in the place of the greatest civilisation of the time, or being a pilgrim in the desert with a bunch of ex-slave nomads, Moses chose the latter.

The greatest OT leader chose to live in tents and had no wealth.

Elijah

As a man who could command kings, Elijah could have been a wealthy man. However, he lived a poor life, often eating hand-to-mouth. When living in hiding by the brook Cherith he was fed by ravens; when this stream dried up he was fed by a poor widow in Zarephath for two years. When he fled to the wilderness near Beersheba, he ate a cake he found when he awoke, lasting forty days and forty nights at Horeb on this meagre provision.

The greatest OT prophet had virtually no material possessions, no home and no wealth.

John the Baptist

Being the son of a distinguished priest John could have settled for an easy, affluent life in Jerusalem or a Levitical city. Instead he lived in the desert wearing camel's hair and leather, living on what he gathered or was given. Indeed, he preached against greed and riches and advised giving away possessions.

Paul

As poor. 2 Cor 6:10

Paul was clever enough to be anything he wanted. He also had a privileged education that gave him a head start in the Jewish community. On top of that he was trained in a trade. Despite these advantages, he chose a wandering life of an evangelist/missionary, earning only enough to provide for food and shelter. Paul could easily have become rich if that was his goal.

The temptation to seek quick riches

Sadly, many believers fall into the temptation to seek easy money rather than work steadily; especially if they have fallen into debt. The desire for quick money is a sin:

Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Prov 23:4

A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
Prov 28:20

The abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. There is a severe evil *which* I have seen under the sun: riches kept for their owner to his hurt. Eccles 5:12-13

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:9-10

If we need money for necessary items, we should pray to the God who gives wealth as he sees fit, not buy a lottery ticket.

Often God takes his people through periods of lack and financial difficulty to test whether they will continue to walk in faith and obedience. I have both experienced this myself and seen it many times. Poverty is not necessarily a punishment; frequently it is a means of developing faith and patience in growing believers.

In these days of austerity and squeezed wages times are hard for very many people. The temptation is to overwork, get into debt or to gamble; all of these avenues lead to ruin. Really broke people need to cry to the Lord for resources. I can testify to being a young parent in desperate need, despite working hard, and knowing the miraculous provision of

the Lord time and time again. I never got rich but I survived. I thank God that I never ran up great debts (it was harder then; credit cards did not exist) but we often needed grace to put food on the table.

I rarely give personal testimonies, but I will share one to the glory of God.

On one occasion, as a poor art student with a family, we were faced with a week of no evening meals at all. We went to church and decided to say nothing to anyone, but to take our needs to the Lord. After the Sunday meeting, we were approached by one person after another inviting us for an evening meal. As we left the meeting, we had been invited out every night of the week. By this means we survived until a grant cheque came through.

God is as good as his word; it is through testing times that we learn to believe it.

What do you glory in?

Now, of course, we glory in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ pre-eminently, but in our day to day lives what do we boast about or celebrate? Paul stated that he boasted about his tribulations.

And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Rm 5:3-4

'Glory' here means rejoice in, boast about, glory in.

Paul explains (here and in other places; e.g. Eph 3:13, Phil 1:29) that we celebrate problems just as Martin Luther did (who said that his problems were vitally important in his walk with God, more than any other thing).

This is completely in line with the teaching of Jesus who said:

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Matt 5:3-4

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven. Matt 5:10-12

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, And revile *you*, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward *is* great in heaven. Lk 6:22-23

We must understand that the Christian life is not like the material lives of non-Christians upon the earth; it is a life lived in the kingdom of God that has completely different rules and standards. We do not live like other people.

We could list very many contradictions between living in the world and living by faith; however, for our purposes here, we are looking at riches. The world celebrates riches and runs on money; Christians celebrate tribulations and willingly suffer want because that brings God's grace.

Thus Paul and Martin Luther boasted in their tribulations. Both could have been extremely rich, but both sided with the poor and celebrated their sufferings.

Why are riches dangerous?

The problem with wealth is that it completely circumvents being in need and thus falling alone on the grace of God. Whether knowingly or not, rich people glory in their riches because it is these that eliminate need.

Why do people play the lottery and seek riches? It is because they think that these will eliminate all their needs and bring satisfaction to do anything they want.

Rich people, by definition, are not in material need; their riches provide a buffer and comfort zone that protects them from material problems. Thus the centre of the life of rich people is usually some form of entertainment, whether it is expensive hobbies, sports or fine dining and vacations.² A distraction and comfort for rich people is buying a new Ferrari or a new house.

Worse than that, wealth cuts people off from the real world and often causes a callous attitude to those around who are in need. Time and again I have seen Christians that live in relative material comfort who exhibit a callous stance toward the poor and needy in society. Indeed, I know of Christian leaders who are actively working to worsen the lot of the poor and needy by working with politicians whose agenda is to crush the poor and destroy the NHS. Being rich creates a force field, which shuts off the crying needs and sufferings of those who are poor. Many affluent people have no clue about what is really going on in the world.

The key law

'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness'. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10

This is a law for Christians. God's grace is perfected in weakness and needs; therefore problems (including financial need) is necessary to thrust us upon God's grace. In God's kingdom it is the weak who are strong.

When you are living a comfortable, affluent or wealthy lifestyle, it is difficult to feel needy and call upon the grace of God. Christians are those who take pleasure in infirmities, distresses and needs because they throw the individual upon God alone for resources.

Thus to focus upon riches means to lose focus upon grace. It is that simple.

Practical application

Believers need to settle for themselves some rules to direct their walk with God regarding money in the light of all this.

Do not seek quick, easy money

This will include all forms of gambling; including lottery tickets and raffles.

Do not covet material goods to demonstrate affluence

Buying items that we need is fine; even buying the occasional little treat if we can afford it;³ however, buying things just to 'keep up with the Joneses' is wrong. Thus be satisfied with

² Now I know that a few rich people are avidly engaged in charitable work, but they are the tiny minority.

³ Jesus' seamless woven robe was a big treat for a poor man. He neither celebrated it nor sought it.

your car until you need a new one. Be satisfied with your television and don't keep buying the latest, biggest version when it comes out. Don't buy stuff that you don't need just because it is expected of you. Try to live economically and frugally. Be content with what you have.

The prosperity gospel of seeking to have all your material desires is false.

Do not purchase things that you cannot afford

Mortgages for houses are a modern necessity for many people; apart from that it is unwise to buy anything on credit. Loans from places like Wonga are tempting but their interest rate is 5000%. Credit card debt attracts a lesser, but still very bad, interest rate. Very soon debt controls your whole life and some people never get out of it. It is better to avoid debt and suffer rather than get into debt and suffer much longer.

Now some people have very hard choices, and it is the job of the church to help such people (when the church is working properly). I speak as someone that has known significant poverty as a young family man. Nevertheless, getting into debt will only make things worse.

Christians in need must lay their problems before the Lord and call upon him to help. This is not said in a patronising manner; it is just a fact. It is surprising how many people have run more quickly to credit schemes rather than agonising before the Lord.

Be quick to give things away

Don't hold on to possessions that are unnecessary; be a giver and help people.

Be a generous giver of money

As far as you are able, give what you can to the poor and to God's work as he shows you (not as some man demands).

Pay your taxes

Do not cheat the taxman, or your boss; even if they are trying to twist you. If you are defrauded, seek the proper channels of redress; do not take action into your own hands.

Live a modest lifestyle

Do not seek the most expensive goods because you have the money. Do not try to impress people with your watches and jewellery, houses and cars.

Do not envy the rich

Rather feel pity for them as their chance of hearing the Gospel is hindered by their wealth.

Do not fill your eyes with adverts

This material, consumer society (built on debt) fills social spaces with adverts for expensive goods; whether it is posters on streets, commercials on TV, ads on YouTube or many other things. These seek to brainwash consumers into buying the latest technology or gadget or must-have social possession.

Save your money to cater for life's events

The godly man is also a prudent man. A prudent man is one who has wisdom to deal with the affairs of life;⁴ thus being prudent means that one saves money as far as one is able.

⁴ Prov 16:21, 'The wise in heart will be called prudent'.

Conclusion

Throughout history godly men have avoided riches, even when they were originally gifted with them. Many saints gave their wealth away before starting a missionary work for the Lord, seeing it as an earthly distraction. We could illustrate this with men like Peter Waldo or CT Studd, about whom I have written before.

However, today, supposed Christian preachers are writing books and telling people that, '*God wants you rich*'; though it seems that only the leaders seem to get rich while thousands of people giving them money get poorer. This teaching is a lie, plain and simple.

Christians do not need riches and should not seek them. Their job is to be content in all things, trusting in the God who supplies our every need.

The beggar [Lazarus] died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Lk 16:22-23

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