

FAR ABOVE RUBIES:

Insights on living the Christian life – from a female perspective



RICH MAN, POOR MAN

“Thanks for the electric guitar you gave me for Christmas,” little Adam said to his uncle the first time he saw him after the holidays. “It’s the best present ever.” “That’s great,” said his uncle. “Do you know how to play it?” “Oh I don’t play it,” Adam replied. “My mum gives me a pound every morning not to play it during the day and my dad gives me a fiver a week not to play it at night!”

When I was growing up my parents never really talked about money, probably because there wasn’t a lot of it. You received your pocket money on a Friday night – non-negotiable! It’s a different story nowadays. Even children actually expect payment for keeping their rooms tidy or doing chores, as well as receiving pocket money. Money, however, is one of those subjects that Christians don’t like to talk about and feel that it’s not spiritual or that it’s sinful to be rich. This is not biblical. There is absolutely nothing wrong or sinful about having money or being prosperous as long as we are good stewards of what God has given us. Indeed, it is God’s desire that we prosper, as we see in III John 2: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” Also, some Christians believe the lie that there is some sort of virtue in being poor and needy. Not so. Being able to maintain a good attitude during times of poverty and suffering certainly is a virtue and is to be commended. It is not God’s will, however, that we should live poor and needy lives, as we see from Phil 4:19 where He has promised to “*supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*”

In 1 Tim 6:10 we read that money is not the “*the root of all evil*”; it is the “*love of money*” that is. This can be seen in the parable of the rich man in Luke 12:13-21 where the hidden dangers of wealth, self-sufficiency and greed are revealed.

Rich Man: In this parable Jesus tells of a rich farmer whose land yielded so many crops that his barns were too small to store the grain, so he decided that he would pull them down and build bigger barns. Then he would say to his soul: *“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.”* (v.19). On the face of it this sounds like a very good plan and we would agree that there is certainly nothing wrong with following good business practices and saving for the future. The problem was that he had become self-sufficient and self-centred. It was all about him. God had no part in his life. We need to be careful that we don't fall into the trap of believing that we can accumulate and do things in our own strength and forget that everything we have comes from the Lord.

In this day and age it can be so easy to get caught up in materialism. We are constantly bombarded by the media with things that *“you simply must have”* and even our children are fed the lie that if they don't have the latest designer clothes or mobile phones they are “deprived”. I grew up with very little of this world's goods, but had a loving family who always did their very best for me. I had a very happy childhood and never once felt deprived. It has been said that *“materialism isn't owning things, but being owned by things”* and how true this is. If anything stands between you and God then you are in trouble. Now it isn't wrong to want to be successful in this life, but we need to remember that true success comes from knowing God and being obedient to His will.

Poor Man: In Luke 12:20 God tells the rich farmer: *“Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall all these things be, which thou hast provided.”* It was obvious that this man had lived a life of false security. He thought that he had secured his future and that death was far away. He was wrong on both counts. He didn't get the time to enjoy his wealth and death was just around the corner. The greatest tragedy in the parable, however, is not what the farmer left behind but what lay before him – eternity without God. This man may have been rich as far as the world was concerned, but when it came to the Kingdom of God he was extremely poor. Jesus puts it like this in Matthew 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 reminded of the words of Jim Elliot: *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”* God wants us to find our purpose, our security and our delight in Him. It is good that we prepare for our future but it is more important that we prepare for eternity, for we just don't know when Jesus will either come or call!