

THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF WEALTH

(EXPLANATION)

The purpose of this Explanation is as follows:

- 1. To point out that it is futile for a man to live for the accumulation of wealth, although this is very much the world's view of money and especially the Chinese mentality.*
- 2. To show how chasing after wealth has brought much harm to man and to his environment.*
- 3. To understand that the Bible has an eternal aspect of wealth and that the Christian can and should invest in that which is eternal rather than the wealth that is only temporal.*
- 4. To understand that in the Christian's perspective, all source of wealth belongs to God and even the Christian belongs to God.*
- 5. To show that God will take care of His own, including the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Even more God will take care of His children.*
- 6. To point out that as a result, the Christian is not to be taken up by the search of wealth, but to be able to use his wealth to help others in need.*

THE LOVE FOR MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

1. The Bible did not say that money is evil in itself. Money is neutral. To have money is not bad. We all need money in order to survive in this world. The issue which the Bible is addressing itself is the heart attitude of the person. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

A person may appear to be a great leader on the outside, but he may be disqualified by God because he/she is not qualified in his/her inward character. A person may be beautiful in the outside but God is interested in true beauty - the inward beauty of the heart. To man the disciples are just some unlearned, ignorant and simple people, but after they have been with Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, they become people who turned the world upside down for God (Acts 4:13).

Therefore, the problem is not money itself. God does not want us all to be poor people. In fact, the Bible says that one of the blessings of God is prosperity. There is nothing wrong in being rich or in having a lot of money. However, **the problem is in the LOVE FOR MONEY. The problem lies in greed. The problem lies with living for money and placing our security in money.**

2. In the parable in Luke 12, Jesus showed us the attitudes or values that people in this world has towards wealth and possessions (verse 19):

- **Security** – "Plenty of good things laid up for many years to come"
- **Luxury** – "Take life easy"
- **Pleasure** – "Eat, drink and be merry"
- **Independence** – As long as his grain lasted, the rich man needed no one else. His trust was in his wealth.

Jesus explained that the man had laid up treasure **for himself**. He was the centre of his own universe, with his wealth to provide for his needs alone. He lived for his wealth and his wealth becomes a controlling factor in his life.

That is why Jesus said: "Watch out! **Be on your guard against all kinds of greed**; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Never let money or wealth take a central place in our lives.

Money, wealth and fortune have a central place in the Chinese culture. It is so much a part of the culture that we do not realize that it is so. One obvious demonstration of this is the Chinese New Year. Nearly all of the blessing we wish to others has something to do with money: "Kung Hei Faat Choi", etc... Many young people do not realize this central importance of money until he/she goes out to work in the secular world. They find out that they are subconsciously being sucked into this greed for money. you see them a year later and will discover that they are changed people. Previously, they have a lot of ideals, simple in their relationships, etc... but become very secular after they get into the world. That is why Jesus says to "**watch out!**" and "**be on your guard**".

As we look at this world, we can clearly see the love for money had brought great evil mankind and this universe. It destroys innocent and good young people. Even Children learn to steal in school in order to satisfy their love for material possessions. Shop-lifting, stealing, robbery, commercial crime, bribery, pollution of the environment by factories, mass destruction of our forests, etc... are common all in the name of money. Men would even destroy their loved ones for it. Fathers and mothers would neglect their children for it. Men would kill for it. We can spend so much time on this topic.

We as Christians must have a value change. Our values must become what the Bible says. We need to take a lead in this area and bring some sanity and humanity into our world. God did not design man to be like this.

THE FUTILITY OF LIVING FOR EARTHLY WEALTH

1. Jesus says that it is futile to live for money. Jesus says, "**You fool!**" How foolish of us to do so. We cannot control our lives. We think that we can accumulate much wealth to enjoy it in the future, but we cannot even control our future. We do not even know if we can live tomorrow. We do not know what will happen to

our wealth when we die. Will our wealth bring blessings or curse? Will it be spent in no time at all?

In verse 21, Jesus tells us that it is stupid to store up things for oneself. There in no way we can make sure that we can enjoy what we have stored up in the future. It is better to invest in that which has eternal value.

Many Chinese spent their whole life trying to store up wealth for their children but never spent time building into their lives. What they ended up with was a lot of money but a terrible home and children with broken and useless lives. They are fools. They fooled themselves and their children paid for their mistakes.

2. In Matthew 6, Jesus pointed out one of the greatest problems that the world has to deal with: the erosion, decay, theft and depreciation of the things they treasure. Things and wealth depreciates in value each year. They can also be stolen and robbed. Anticipating and allowing for loss of our treasures is a part of the system in our society. That is why billions of dollars are spent to protect or replace treasure. In 1992, more than one billion dollars was loss by insurance companies through car thefts in Hong Kong. This has put many small insurance companies out of business. Security systems are big business. The recent spate of arm robbery has emphasized the importance of maximum security for shops. Even T.V. adds are broadcasted regularly to teach people to be secure in locking up their home. We are often woken up and disturbed by car alarm systems going off by mistake.
3. That is why Jesus says not to invest in the treasure on this world. **"Do not store up for your selves treasures on earth...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven."**

INVEST IN ETERNAL THINGS

1. What does it mean to **"store up treasures in heaven?"** What type of wealth is transferrable from earth to heaven? To answer this question, there are 4 questions we ought to answer:
 - a. What will finally happen to all treasures of this earth?
 - b. Is there any treasure on earth that will last forever?
 - c. If so, what is it?
 - d. In the light of this, what should a Christian consider to be profitable in this life?
2. 2 Peter 3:10 tells us that finally, on the day of the return of our Lord, all material will be destroyed. Nothing in this world will last. They will all be burnt up. Nothing will remain. They will all dissolve into nothing. Therefore, it is stupid for us to invest in the things that will not last.
3. According to the Bible, there are only 2 things that will last forever. These two things are eternal. They can be transferred from earth to eternity. These are:
 - a. The Word of God (Matthew 24:35)

b. People (John 3:36; Matthew 25:46)

Therefore, it is crucial that the Christian is living for those things that will last forever. There two things should be what we value in this life.

4. Christians should evaluate their lives and ask themselves how they are spending their time and their money.

Do you spend most of your money to get things that will perish or are you investing your money in eternal things?

How do you spend your time? Does it reflect this correct Christians value or does it reflect the value of the world?

5. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 tells us that there are two types of treasures we can accumulate on earth: gold, silver, costly stones; or wood, hay, straw. They will all be tested by fire one day. The first group will last survive the test and will have eternal value while the next group will all be burnt up. What if fire were to fall today? Would you carry any gold, silver, or precious stones to the new Kingdom? Would there be any lives that will go to the new land because you invested your life in them?

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

ALL OF THE EARTH BELONGS TO GOD INCLUDING ALL WEALTH AND ALL PEOPLE

"The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains." (1 Corinthians 10:26) This is an important truth in the Bible. The world's view of wealth is that material possessions are controlled by man. That is why they would give their lives to the purpose of accumulation of wealth. However, we have already discovered that this is incorrect. This view only leads ultimately to disappointment and wasted effort and time. The Bible points out clearly that God is the One who controls all wealth. They all belong to God.

"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember that Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth." (Deuteronomy 8:17,18)

God owns all wealth! People own nothing. **If the Lord owns all that the earth contains, then He owns the people in it, too.** You are owned by God. Moreover, the Bible says that you are bought with a price and that you do not belong to yourself. God's ownership of your life means that not only do you have no right to decide what you do with your life, but that He is responsible for your life as well.

As a Christian, you need to settle this ownership of your life once and for all. Who does your life belong to? The Bible says that you do not belong to your parents, nor do you belong to yourself. Your life does not belong to you boy/girl friend or spouse. Your life does not belong to money or any such possessions. Your life belongs to

God. You need to settle this for yourself. The Bible says, "No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and Money." (Matthew 6:24) You need to make up your mind whom you are going to serve.

Technically, you belong to God. But you will continue to feel a conflict inside you as long as you have not consciously and deliberately decided to be His servant in your day-to-day activities. Make the decision now. Have no more confusion about who you're serving! This is a key decision in your life.

GOD'S OWNERSHIP OF MY LIFE MEANS THAT I AM HIS RESPONSIBILITY

The Christian's view of wealth is that it all belongs to God, including me. Since I belong to God, then it is His responsibility to look after me. If He owns us, then He is obligated to care for us.

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)

Since you are His child and you have committed your life to serve God as your master, He promises to care for you. This is an important truth for Christians. Many Christians are afraid to stop serving riches to serve God alone because they are afraid that God will not really take care of him. Is this really safe? Is this really possible? **Yes! It is really true! God has promised to take care of your needs!**

*"God will meet all your needs **according** to His riches in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)*

This is a promise. However, **needs** are not the same as **wants**. Needs are those things which are essential for our well-being. They are what is necessary for life. Wants are what we desire but not necessarily what we need. Although God may give us our wants, but He has only promised to give us our needs. However, the passage in Matthew 7 that we looked at tells us that God is a good God and very generous with His children. If earthly parents who are not perfect know how to give good things to their children, even more will our perfect Father in heaven give the best to His children.

Sometimes God does not give us what we want because these wants are not good for us. *For example, my daughters may ask me for lots of lollies because they like lollies. However, I will not give them what they want because they are bad for their teeth.*

This is not to say that a person can be lazy or that a person has a right to expect others to provide for him the things that he is well able to provide for himself. Jesus said, "Do not be anxious" - do not be concerned to the point of distraction. God **will** provide for you.

Jesus used two illustrations from nature. What about the birds? They do not need to sow or reap, but because they are a part of the world that belongs to God, He feeds them. **He is obligated as their owner to care for them.** What about His own children who are much more valuable to God.

Another illustration is the lilies and the grass of the field. See how beautiful they are - more than any of man's design of clothes. Yes! As their owner, He cares for them. This is more proof that He will care for His own children.

This view of wealth gives us great freedom! It frees us to do that which God wants us to do without the bondage of fear of the future which bind us to the life of accumulation of wealth. Money no longer becomes our master. We no longer become slaves to money. We are free to serve God and to live for others. Wow! What freedom!

WEALTH NO LONGER TIES US UP BUT WE ARE FREE TO USE OUR WEALTH TO SERVE OTHERS

In 1 Kings 17:8-16, there is a story about a widow who was so poor that she and her son were at the end of their lives. They have nothing left except enough for one last meal. They do not have enough strength or ability to get more food. So she forced herself to search for firewood for her last meal with her son. Then they met Elijah, the prophet. He asks this woman to give him water and food. This was the last of her food, what should she do?

If we look at this incident from the world's view of wealth, then it is crazy for this widow to look after others while she and her son is facing starvation and death. However, this lady has great faith that God will take care of her and when Elijah said, "Do not fear," faith exploded in her heart and she trusted what God says rather than the circumstances. She gave the food to Elijah.

What happened was proof that what God said He will do - He does take care of His own. God added to the barrel of flour and the jar of oil. Neither of them ever became empty. God supplied her with all she needs.

This incident teaches us three important lessons:

- a. When we trust God for our needs, He will supply.
- b. We should not be afraid to help others when God wants us to do so.
- c. We should keep our eyes on the Source rather than on the supply.

A Christian is to use his wealth to do the will of God. We should trust God to continue to supply our needs.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 tells us that the more we sow the more we will reap, but the less we sow, the less we will reap. God will always give us enough that we not only have

enough for ourselves, but also to help those whom He wants us to help and to give to Him.

A good motto for a Christian to have is:

"Learn to live simply, so that others can simply live!"