



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

SUBJECT: MONEY

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THOSE WHO ARE RICH

Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him. Psalm 49:16-17

Almost everyone understands that the words of Jesus, "Do to others what you would have them to do to you," are known as the Golden Rule (see Matthew 7:12); but in the real world the Golden Rule is, "He who has the gold has the rule." "Money talks!" we say, and few would deny that money has power. That thought was the reasoning behind the sign which reads, "Money is not everything in life, but it is way ahead of whatever is in second place."

That's the way we look at it, but certainly not the way that God looks at it. It's quite amazing that the writers of the New Testament have so much to say about those who are rich since the number of people who actually are rich is so very small. In the New Testament book of James, which came from the pen of the half-brother of Jesus, there is a stern warning to those who are rich. James begins, "Now listen, you rich people.... Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you..." (James 5:1,3). Earlier in his letter, James had warned church leaders against partiality, favoring the person who had riches.

In Paul's letters there are frequent warnings to those who are rich. For example, in his letter to Timothy, a young man who was destined to be a church leader, Paul instructed, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasures for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Why so much space given in Scripture to such a small number of people? First, God wanted those who are in positions of leadership in the world of business and commerce not to make their money at the expense of the poor. He instructs business leaders to pay a decent wage for an honest day's labor.

At the same time, God wanted those who are rich to understand that money cannot buy happiness or favor with God. He wanted them, perhaps more than anything else, to realize that what they have is a stewardship which can be used or abused, and, therefore, use it wisely.

Does this mean, then, that those who have money should give it away and live as those who have none? Acclaimed pastor Francis Chan and his wife purposely downsized their lifestyle and sold their home so that they could experience the joy of giving more deeply.

What's the bottom line? MONEY is neither good nor evil in itself. Like the scalpel of a surgeon it can bring either pain or help. It can bring comfort and blessing or create division and difficulty.

I have known some who were rich and their lives were totally unaffected by what they had. I have also known those whose gifts came with strings attached, who gave simply for the recognition which came with the donation.

When such a gift was received by Amy Carmichael, laboring among the outcast children of India, in spite of some dire financial needs Amy returned the gift with a brief note saying that such a gift was completely unacceptable to God. What we have really is His to be used wisely for our families, the work of God, and the improvement of our world around us.

Resource Reading: James 1:1-18