

The book of James

1: 9-11

Welcome back to our study in the book of James.

This week we will study and ask the question, "Is it ok for a Christian to be rich?"

✎ **James 1:9-11** *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.*

Verse 9 also reads in the NLT as:

✎ **James 1:9 (NLT)** *Christians who are poor should be glad, for God has honored them.*

So reading this you would think that's it's not ok to be rich because it says that God has honored them, but you must also read the next verse.

✎ **James 1:10a (NLT)** *And those who are rich should be glad, for God has humbled them.*

You see, whether you are rich or poor, God is working in your life. We tend to think God has blessed someone because they have a nice house, and new cars a good job and what seems to be the perfect family. Our problem is that we base everything upon worldly possessions.

The following verses we looked at in other studies, but I think they apply here also. If you will remember king Solomon and how God asked him for whatever he wanted and Solomon's response was for wisdom. God replied with.

† **1 Kings 3:10-14** *The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."*

Solomon did not ask for the things of this world, but asked for the things of God and His direction to lead His people. God did give Solomon the wisdom that he asked for, but God also gave him the things he didn't ask for, which were riches.

"So then it's ok to be rich as a Christian?"

Yes, and no, read verse 14 again.

✠ ***"So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."***

If you read on about Solomon, you find out that even though he had riches and wisdom, he allowed them to turn his back on God.

It's not about being rich or poor physically, but what you do with what God has given you.

My personal desire is to be able to leave my job and teach the bible full time on the Internet. My heart is to continue with these studies, but I also desire to do studies for the youth as well as for children which would include cartoons and such for the children to learn God's word.

I also desire to do web sites for other Christians, along with the current books I am writing.

And finally my heart as a musician is to do a worship CD that would be given out for free so others can worship the Lord without any charge.

They are all good things, but they haven't happened yet, and they may never happen. But does that mean I stop doing what I am doing? NO! God has given me a ministry on the Internet and I am required to be faithful with what He has given me. God knows my heart, but God also knows what plans He has for my life. I have given my all to God. So however God chooses to use me, is in His hands and plans, not my own.

So what does all this have to do with you?

What has God blessed you with? Has it been riches? Maybe you do have a nice house and new cars and a great paying job. What are you doing with them? Are you keeping them all to yourself or are you sharing with others?

"But I worked hard for what I have."

Yes you did, but who gave you the ability to do what you do?

Who gave you the job you have?

Who gave you your family?

Who breathed life into you?

Jesus speaks of such a man who thought the same way.

† **Luke 12:16-21** *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry. ' 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."*

Did you catch verse 21? Read it in the NLT.

† **Luke 12:21 (NLT)** *"Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."*

Jesus also says this about the rich.

† **Matt 19:23-26** *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." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

"So Jesus is saying it's not good to be rich?"

I don't think so. If you read the verse before these it tells of a rich man who came to Jesus and asked.

† **Matt 19:16** *Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"*

Jesus answered.

† **Matt 19:17-19** *So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "*

The rich man answered.

† **Matt 19:20** *The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"*

Jesus responded with.

† **Matt 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."*

The rich man's response was.

† **Matt 19:22** *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

So the problem wasn't that he was rich, but that he didn't want to share God's blessing with others.

So to answer the question of is it ok to be rich as a Christian, the answer is not if it's ok to have much, but what are you doing with what you have.

† **2 Cor 9:6-7 (NLT)** *Remember this--a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully.*

If you plant one apple seed you will grow an apple tree, which in turn will produce many apples. If you take a portion of those apples and plant their seeds, then you will have many apple trees.

What does this mean? You may not have much, but if you invest it in the kingdom of God, He will multiply what you give, in turn you now have more to give and as you do you still have even more to give.

The same apple seed, if you just throw it away then you have nothing to show. The same goes with what God has given us, if we throw it away, then we shouldn't expect anything in return.

So is this a get rich scheme? NO, as we just read in Cor. ***"Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully."***

Some people have the gift of giving (To learn more about this, go to the study on the gifts of the Holy Spirit) and they just give and give. Maybe you don't have this gift and it's hard for you to give.

I don't think it's a matter of it being hard to give, but it's hard for us to trust God and that He will provide.

† **1 Tim 6:17-18 (NLT)** *Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in*

the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them.

“So Steve, you told us what you want to do for the Lord, why don’t you just quite your job and do it. Where’s your faith?”

God not only increases our faith, but He also gives us wisdom. God has not told me to stop working or to start doing all these other things. If I did quite my job and started doing them, I would fall flat on my face, because it would be my own leading and not the Lord’s.

I like what pastor Chuck Smith says, *“Where God guides, He provides”*. As I said these are things I want to do, not necessarily what the Lord is telling me to do. If/when He allow me to, I will do them. Until then I will continue doing what He has instructed me to do. (quick note: The studies here in James were done in 2003. Here it is 2016 and I have recorded 2 worship CD’s which are on iTunes, and all the money going help those in need through Compassion International and World Vision. One of my Christian novels is currently in the final editing stage then it will be published this year. (Lord willing) and God has provided a great job so I can do these things and bless others.)

Think about the things you now have. Now read James 11 again.

✠ For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

Have you ever read the book of Revelation? If you have, then you will read of earthquakes happening throughout the earth with even the mountains being leveled. There is also mentioned what appears to be some sort of meteor shower and possible even a comet hitting the earth. Everything you have, all the buildings you see, all the cars and stores, everything will someday be destroyed. The sad thing is that these are the things we put our trust in.

✠ Job 15:31 (NLT) Let them no longer trust in empty riches. They are only fooling themselves, for emptiness will be their only reward.

✠ Psalms 49:6-7 (NLT) They trust in their wealth and boast of great riches. Yet they cannot redeem themselves from death by paying a ransom to God.

So who or what are you trusting in?

✠ 1 Tim 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

What if you were rich or had won the Lotto? We all say we would use it for the Lord, but would we really? God knows!

† **Luke 16:11 (NLT)** *And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?*

Maybe you haven't showed your trustworthiness with spiritual things, that's why you have little materially?

Or maybe it's one reason James gives.

† **James 4:3** *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

If you really want to know, ask the Lord to reveal your heart to yourself. You may be surprised.

Next week, back to trials.

May God richly bless you with heavenly blessings!