

## **Disappearing Riches and Riches That Last**

*“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 Timothy 6:17).*

### **Disappearing Riches**

Riches are uncertain. They can't be trusted. They can be lost through carelessness, mismanagement or unfortunate circumstances.

Some people do it to themselves. Michael Jackson died owing millions of dollars. He was the King of Pop, made a fortune, but somehow couldn't hold onto it.

Bernie Madoff did not earn his riches. He stole them. In the end, his schemes caught up with him and he lost his ill-gotten money, his family, and his freedom.

Most people, though, are not rich and famous. They don't have millions to lose. They work hard. They do what they can to provide a decent living for their family.

A lot of people can tell you how uncertain middle class is. One day you're there. The next day you're not. A bad economy can take your job away from you. A dishonest banker can repossess your house. Circumstances can result in the loss of your car, boat, motorcycle, or furniture.

Many others have never seen the day when they could afford the luxuries the middle class had. For whatever reason, making ends meet has always been a struggle. No matter how hard they tried, adequate monetary resources have never been available to them.

### **Riches That Last**

Yes, worldly riches are uncertain. They can be lost. The good news is that eternal riches cannot be lost. No one can take them away from you. They do require a spiritual investment: faith and trust in God. Those riches start with two things you have total control over: your thoughts and your heart. The Bible combines the two. *For as a man thinks in his heart so is he* (Proverbs 23:7). Your attitude, your perspective, your state of mind determines how you handle any given circumstance.

### **Paul: A Man Rich in Faith**

The apostle Paul was a man with many advantages in his life. For a long time, he persecuted followers of Christ because he did not understand who Jesus was. When he finally met Jesus and accepted His offer of salvation, he made an about face and never looked back.

Paul gave up the advantages of status and worldly riches when he became a disciple of Christ. What he gained was greater than what he lost.

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).*

Paul's heart and his mind, given to God, enabled him to be content no matter what his circumstances.

*I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:12-13).*

### **Poverty**

Poverty is a harsh reality. It does not discriminate. It touches old and young, male and female and people of every nationality.

Jesus said the poor would always be with us. The Bible gives many guidelines about helping the poor.

In times like these, many who used to help those in poverty now find themselves in dire circumstances and in need of help themselves. This is a time of a severe reality check.

The "health and wealth" philosophy that has taken charge of churches and television has missed a vital point. Monetary riches are not guaranteed to anyone. Having riches is not proof that God has blessed you.

Some blessed by God with riches have been given the spiritual gift of generosity. I have known some of them. Jesus said, "*you cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matthew 6:24). Part of the way these believers serve God is through sharing the monetary resources He has provided.

Indeed, God does not forbid riches. He created all things for us to enjoy. Some biblical men of faith had great riches. Others did not have the benefit of material resources. Jesus, rather than condemning the poor or accusing them of little faith, joined them.

*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 Corinthians 8:9).*