

Job 31: Living With Integrity

Adapted from a series of studies by Brian Haines



Job 31:16-28

No Confidence in Wealth

"If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; if I have looked at the sun when it shone Or the moon going in splendor, and my heart became secretly enticed, And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, For I would have denied God above.?"

Job 31:24-28

Scriptures reveal that Job was a man blessed with great wealth. In fact, he was the "greatest of all of the men of the east" (1:3). We all know that money and success can change a person for the worst. King Saul was raised up, and thought too much of himself (1 Sam. 15:7). King Nebuchadnezzar looked upon his kingdom, boasted as to his accomplishments, and was promptly struck down by God for seven years (Dan. 4).

Job points to several characteristics that reveal that money did not corrupt his integrity. First, he makes it clear he did not put his trust in wealth. Second, he did not boast about what he had secured in regards to wealth. Third, he points that he did not thank other gods for his blessings. He knew that all that he had was from God, and that he had no special merit that made him more deserving of it.

Temptation of Wealth

Many of us fantasize what it would be like to be rich. We dream of suddenly becoming wealthy, and all of the things we might do with that wealth. Perhaps we think of all the good things we might do with more money. But the truth is, if we are not entirely generous now, we will be less so if we had wealth. If we are not happy now, we will be less so if we had more. This is what the Bible refers to as the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22).

When Paul instructed Timothy on what to teach the brethren, he made certain that there were warnings and admonitions to the rich. In 1 Timothy 6:6-11, 17-19 he tells Timothy to warn people of the dangers of pursuing wealth, and how those with wealth ought to behave.

Credit Where Credit is Due

When most people think of entitlement, they consider those who have a mindset of being given things without working for it. Scriptures warn us of a mindset that fails to accept that wealth is not necessarily the result of hard work, intelligence or creativity (Eccl. 9:11). We might believe that we are wealthy because we worked hard; but that is merely another mindset of entitlement. In Jeremiah's time many boasted that their wealth was the result of their own ability. In Jeremiah 9:23-24 God condemned those who boasted of their blessings. God called men instead to boast on knowing God. God was preparing to destroy Judah, and their boasting was part of the reason this was coming.

There is an Old Testament passage (Proverbs 3:34) quoted often in the New Testament (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5): God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. We can find story after story in both Old and New Testament that God works in such a way that *“whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12).

Using Wealth in a Righteous Manner

There seems to be a great deal said in Scriptures warning us that wealth is a dangerous thing. James especially speaks against those who have obtained wealth in an inappropriate manner in James 5: 1-6. But as alluded to in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, there were some Christians in the first century who were wealthy, and that they used that wealth with righteous conduct. John Mark and Barnabas’ family seemed to be wealthy, as attested to by the fact that they had servants and a home large enough for the whole church to meet (Acts 12:12-13). Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) was likely wealthy, as was perhaps Erastus (Rom. 16:23).

What lessons should we draw from these wealthy Christians? First, they opened their homes and showed hospitality to brethren, both local and from afar. Second, they gave away wealth for the needs of the brethren (Acts 4:36-37). This is both in the collection of the saints as well as with private opportunity. Third, they did not see themselves as unworthy/ too good to suffer or work for the sake of the Gospel, as seen in the journey of Mark and Barnabas.

The Right Mind on Wealth

We might in conclusion consider the prayer of Agur to God: *“Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny You and say, “Who is the LORD?” or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God”* (Proverbs 30:8-9). Jesus refashioned this statement when He taught us to pray *“give us this day our daily bread”*. Few people have the wisdom to accept that wealth is not something that they can safely handle.

Questions to consider:

1. Would you describe yourself as wealthy? Are you wealthy in comparison to those who lived in the time of Job or in the time of Christ? What did you do that acquired your wealth?
2. How did Job’s reaction to losing everything demonstrate he really did not put his confidence in wealth (consider Job 1:21, 1 Tim. 6:7)?
3. What is the deceitfulness of riches?
4. Jesus said in Mark 10:19 that the rich man needed to give all his money to the poor. How does 1 Timothy 6:17-19 reveal that this was not a commandment to all rich Christians? How can we know the difference of which command to obey?
5. What is stewardship? What are some examples today of using wealth in a righteous manner?