



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 07:04:2010

Website: www.victoriouschristianministry.org

STUDY 39: DANGERS OF MATERIALISM AND COVETOUSNESS

TEXT: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (James 5:1-6).

Our study touches on materialism and covetousness both of which are contrary to the divine requirements for righteous living (Hebrews 13:5; Colossians 3:5). God is not against riches but in making materialism the object on one's life as well as the manner and method of acquiring wealth. Rich believers, are admonished to invest their resources in useful purposes that would earn interest in the work of God, not left lying fallow (James 5:1-3; Luke 19:20). To rely on possession - riches, honour, pleasure, popularity and position is to rely on what is intrinsically perishable (James 5:2), deceitful, and condemnatory (v.3).

Not too long ago there was an advert in a daily newspaper regarding a block of flats for sale. The reason given for the sale was '**Owner going away**'. This owner came to the realization that s/he could not take the blocks of flats with him/her, and so wanted to transform them into the sort of wealth that could be taken along to another destination. Believers should remember they live in the last days, and that at the end of life, they will not be able to take their material possessions into their next world – heaven or hell. It is only what is done for Christ that we will be rewarded for in heaven. Therefore, we should not allow material things of this world to militate against the expectancy of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall study this passage from a positive perspective. Instead of taking delight in what self possesses, knowing that self-centredness is friendship with the world, God expects eternal treasures and labour that shall be rewarded on the last day and in heaven.

CANKEROUS NATURE OF MATERIALISM

James 5:1-3

The text begins with the phrase “Go to now...”, an old English phrase that has the meaning of “Now listen...” or “Pay attention to this...” What a beautiful way to gain attention for effective admonition. It is similar to Christ's admonition to the churches – “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Revelation 3:6).” This is a wake-up call to pay attention to the things that really matter in time and eternity. Many who have closed their ears to Biblical teachings on this subject have made shipwrecks of their faith. James pointed out the corrupting influence and cankerous nature of living a life of materialism. The entire object of their lives were focused on heaping “... treasure together for the last days” (James 5:3). Money and material acquisition becomes their god and main reason for living. Is this not still the grand ambition of many in the world today? Such

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

people can easily err for the purpose of achieving their aims.

CONDEMNED METHODS OF ACQUISITION

James 5:4-6

James pointed out and condemned the injustice and wickedness associated with their manner of acquiring wealth including:

1. Keeping back by fraud wages of the labourers hired to reap their fields. This could include not paying their wages on time; paying them an amount lower than their entitlement; delaying the payment of their wages so as to invest the money in other ventures. It is wrong to use money belonging to others for personal investments without their consent. Note, that God hears the cries of such labourers that are unjustly treated – “the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (James 5:4). God’s command still remain - “**Owe no man** any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8).
2. Dedication to a life of comfort, luxury, delicacy, self indulgence, leisure, fun-seeking, having a good time and pleasure (James 5:5). James warned believers - “But she that liveth in **pleasure** is dead while she liveth” (I Timothy 5:6).
3. Becoming wanton in the process of seeking the above (James 5:5) i.e. becoming reckless, careless, heartless and without regard for what is right, just, humane, etc. This explains why they could keep back wages of their labourers by fraud.
4. Condemning and killing the just, weak and defenseless (James 5:6). This must have been done for the purpose of eliminating obstacles to achieving their materialistic purposes.

CONSECRATION OF TREASURE AND LABOUR FOR ETERNAL VALUES

James 5:1-6; Colosians 3:1,2; John 6:27; Matthew 6:19,20; 19:21; I Timothy 6:6-12; Proverbs 11:28,30; John 4:36; I Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:26; 3:11; Ephesians 6:7,8.

Believers ought ever to be distinguished from the world in the great object of their life. Life and time should not be spent gathering the mundane things of this world. As for worldly men, some of them are seeking wealth, others fame; some seek after comfort, others after pleasure. Subordinately you may seek after any of these, but your main and principal motive as a Christian should always be to live for Christ. To live for glory? Yes, but for His glory. To live for pleasure? Yes, but when you are merry, sing psalms and make melody in your hearts to the Lord. To live for wealth? Yes, but to be rich in faith (Hebrews 11:33-35). You may lay up treasure, but lay it up in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matthew 6:20). You can dedicate your daily life wholly to the service of Jesus, taking as your motto, "For to me to live is Christ". Winning souls for Christ, bringing people to the Lord, turning many away from sin and turning many to righteousness all amount to laying up eternal treasures and labour that shall be rewarded.

The time is short (I Corinthians 7:29-31). This is the time to prepare in personal inner holiness, to separate from the corrupt worldly system around us and labour for eternal rewards. Every believer ought to be busy inviting others into the kingdom. Tell them of Jesus Christ who came to save the lost that they may also prepare for heaven.

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern