

## **CLOSING WORDS**

Many people in the world are preoccupied with the pursuit of material riches and worldly fame, status and greatness. They regard these as important goals in life and see how one fares in these areas as indicators of success.

The negative influence of the spirit of the world is pervasive, and what the world is preoccupied with has significant impact on all who live in this world. God's children are not exempt.

As citizens of heaven living in this fallen world, we are called by the Lord Jesus to be the salt of the earth and the light of this world. In order to be salt and light, we have to resist the influences of the world, and our mind-set and values have to be shaped by the eternal perspective and the realities in God's kingdom. This is what the apostle Paul exhorts us to do in Romans 12:1-2. We are not to be conformed to the world, but instead, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is integral to the expression of our worship of God, our commitment to Him, and our presenting ourselves to Him as living sacrifices.

We need to have a good grasp of the biblical teaching on these issues. Our understanding and conviction in these areas, and what we are committed to, will have a direct bearing on our personal relationship with God, our growth in moral and spiritual stature, and how effectively we participate in the fulfilment of God's purposes.

### **Being truly rich**

In the first five messages, I considered with you what it means to be truly rich.

We noted that material riches do not endure, yet many long for these because of greed and the desire for indulgent living, and also because they seek a sense of security.

Christians can also falter in this area of material wealth. That is why the Lord Jesus warns us about it time and again. He warns us against laying up for ourselves treasures on earth and teaches us not to be anxious about the material things of life. At the same time, He urges us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and to seek first the kingdom of God.

The Lord Jesus does not desire that we be materially rich but spiritually poor. He desires that we be spiritually rich, even if we are materially poor.

The life and teaching of the Lord Jesus help us to see that our attitude and approach towards material wealth and possessions have a direct bearing on our relationship with God, our being truly rich, our spiritual health and our eternal well-being. Although the love of money can be a snare and can ruin our lives, material wealth can be put to good use.

Thoughtful giving to the Lord's work can help to advance His kingdom. It can contribute to the well-being of others. At the same time, we are being blessed, and our walk with God and our own spiritual life enriched.

In exercising good stewardship of what the Lord has entrusted to us, there is a proper place for thoughtful planning for the future and wise investments, and careful spending on ourselves and our loved ones.

The Lord Jesus wants to impress upon us that having the right attitude towards material things is part of the wider issue of consecration and true discipleship—the giving up of all our own possessions and following Him, regarding nothing as our own to do as we please, and consecrating everything to the Lord to be used as He pleases. Are we truly His stewards? When we tell the Lord we consecrate to Him our all, do we really mean it, or are we merely paying lip service, with little reality in practical outworking?

It is important that we grasp the Lord's intent when He instructs us to give up all our own possessions. When we do so, we will be able to appreciate better the central thrust of the meaning of the spirit of true discipleship with regards to material wealth and other aspects of the Christian life.

May the Lord search our hearts and help us to see in what way and to what degree we have a problem in this area of material wealth, and may He strengthen us to resolve these properly and deeply.

Are we materially rich and doing well by the world's standards, but in reality spiritually poor? Do we think we are spiritually rich, and do others also regard us to be so, when in reality we are spiritually poor, miserable and wretched? Will we be content if we are spiritually rich though materially poor?

Many have fallen prey to the wiles of the evil one and their lives ruined by the deceitfulness of riches. Instead of desiring to get rich and longing for material wealth, let us flee from these things and concentrate on pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Let us nurture the quality of our character and attitudes and the positive moral and spiritual realities in our life. Let us nurture these based on sound knowledge of truths revealed in the Scriptures and seek to express them appropriately in our lives.

### **Being truly great**

In the last three messages, we considered what it means to be truly great.

We noted that worldly greatness is futile and has no true value. It is fleeting; it passes with this age. Worldly greatness does not bring true fulfilment. Instead, it often brings about pride, jealousy and strife. It is often motivated by self-interest – a desire for fame, power and self-exaltation, and a desire to exercise authority over others. We should not seek to be great in this way.

True greatness, on the other hand, is extremely precious and of enduring value, and we must set our hearts on the path of true greatness.

But, as we have seen, our primary focus should not be on attaining greatness. If we make it our primary focus, we are in danger of being tainted by negative elements such as a spirit of pride and superiority, a spirit of self-exaltation, and a competitive spirit.

It is more helpful that we concentrate on developing inner qualities that are important to God. As Christ is our Lord and perfect example, we should set our heart to know Him more deeply and learn to be more like Him in character and attitude. As we do so and make progress in these areas, we will then be making progress in attaining true greatness.

On several occasions, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples the truth that true greatness is vitally linked to having the heart of a servant.

The heart of a servant is not merely a single trait but a whole mind-set, an approach to life, the attitude of heart. It is perfectly exemplified in Christ's own life and vividly presented by the apostle Paul in Philippians 2. Although He existed in the form of God, He emptied Himself and took on the likeness of men in the form of a bond-servant. And as a bond-servant, He served humbly, out of a heart of love. In the midst of intense pain and agony, He persevered in doing God's will, to the point of death on the Cross. Such is a life of true greatness, and God the Father highly exalted Him.

To be a servant or slave of all is to have a servant's heart that is prepared to serve others according to the will of God – humbly, with perseverance, with a heart of love and for their edification. And we will do so even if our service goes unnoticed or is difficult or unglamorous. When we serve with such a heart, we are in reality serving the Lord.

We ought not neglect doing good, even if it appears to be insignificant in men's eyes. What appears great may not be great in the eyes of God, and conversely, what appears little may be of great value to Him. Let us take heed and learn well from the Lord's commendation of the poor widow who contributed just two copper coins.

Let us learn to perceive things from the perspective of God and His kingdom and learn to serve humbly and in love in all situations, whether our service appears significant or not.

Let us concentrate on developing good character and positive attitudes, not just for the moment, but for our whole life. This is something feasible for every child of God. It is indeed feasible for every child of God to be truly great in God's kingdom.

When we persevere, learn and grow well, and serve the Lord faithfully and effectively, we will be truly rich and great. God will have the freedom to work in and through our

lives. We will be laying a good foundation for the future and can look forward to the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) and the crown of life (James 1:12, Rev. 2:10).

May the Lord be pleased to help each one of us to be truly rich and great in His sight and in His kingdom.