

## Three Rich Men

by Dr. Walter L. Wilson

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"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Timothy 6:17).

In the Gospel of Luke three rich men are mentioned. Dr. Luke has more to say about rich men than anybody else in the Bible. He also says more about women than any other writer in the Bible. God chose a doctor to write more than one fourth of the New Testament. God has chosen men from every walk of life to proclaim the glories of His lovingkindness and grace, so that we may know that He suits every kind of person, including those from the legal profession, the sciences, and the arts. I have a list of one hundred and fifty of the finest men of earth, from every department of life, who have given their testimony that Christ Jesus satisfies their souls and meets their needs.

In the twelfth chapter of Luke we read of a man who had his riches in the making; in the eighteenth chapter of a man who had great riches and kept them; and in the sixteenth chapter of a man who had made his riches and then lost them. Each of these men is brought before us for a different purpose.

The man who was making his riches had his own plans for the future. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:16-19).

Let us remember that the Lord reads our very thoughts. We know what this man was thinking centuries ago across the sea, because God took this man's thoughts and broadcast every one. Our thoughts may be hidden from each other, but they are not hidden from our Lord. "What shall I do?" He had no idea that God would do anything about it, and he shut Him out of his plans. He wasn't satisfied with the riches he had acquired, and wanted still more riches. His satisfaction did not depend upon the amount he had acquired. He wanted a still larger amount. "What shall I do? . . . I have no room . . . This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater." He was going to do this, but never

got it done. "There will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul" . . . It was at this point that he made his mistake; he owned the grain, but not his soul.

Notice what God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" He wasn't a fool because he was rich. God giveth riches and wealth. God never calls a man a fool because he is intelligent, and diligent, and successful in his business. But this man substituted his riches for God, and for that reason he was a fool. Here is a rich man who had no room in his life for God.

The reason I am talking to you about rich men is that most of us are after riches, but most of us never get them. There used to be a mule in the Barnes circus that they loved to tease by tying a pole on its back and hanging an ear of corn on one end of the pole about eighteen inches in front of his nose. That mule just about wore himself out trying to get that corn, but he couldn't quite reach it.

Maybe you haven't realized it, but the majority of us are just like that mule. We are after riches. We legislate for a minimum wage, invest our money, put on more salesmen, and do almost anything to get rich. That seems to be the goal of the human heart. This man got his riches, for our Lord says, "A certain rich man."

### **Rich Men Are Never Satisfied**

But our Lord also tells us that he wasn't satisfied. He tells us this in order to keep us from thinking that we would be satisfied if we were in that man's place. Won't you take this lesson to heart? Whatever you are reaching for and trying to get, you will find described in the Scriptures. God let other men get what you are trying to get, and they were not satisfied. What makes you think that you would be? That which did not satisfy others will never satisfy you. But God does have that which will satisfy you: Christ Jesus will satisfy your soul.

"I will say to my soul (after I have pulled down my barns, and built greater), ...take thine ease." Why didn't he say to his soul right then, "Soul, take thine ease?" It was because the riches he had acquired didn't give his soul any ease. The heart is three cornered, and the world is round, and they never fit. Those who have tried to acquire riches are not satisfied.

I was talking to a man recently, and he was telling me of the heartbreaks, cares, sorrows, troubles and difficulties he experienced in his position. Yet there are three thousand men under him who wish

they had his job and his income. He sat there before me broken-hearted, because he had just received a letter of criticism.

The grass on the other side of the fence is always the greenest. You invariably see cows and horses standing in a lovely pasture, but sticking their heads through the fence trying to get what is outside. What the other man has seems better than what you have. This man had riches, but instead of turning to God and thanking Him for the riches, he said, "I will prepare to keep on getting and getting." And then, what?

Let me tell you what our colored washerwoman said one morning when I asked her why she was so happy. "Wall, I'll tell you," she replied, "Ah ain't got no money to lose, so ah never worries about losin' none. Ah ain't got no furniture to lose, for ah gave it to the Lord, and if any thin' happens to it, the Lord did it to His own stuff, not mine. Ah has a fine, healthy body, but if ah gets sick and dies, ah'm goin' to heaven, and you don't think ah'll worry about that, do you?" She was satisfied with Christ.

This man had his riches, but he had no peace, no rest, no satisfaction. Sometime in the future he would say to his soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry." That is all he could say. If you have food and a place to live, and the Lord Jesus, you may have a happy, contented heart.

Solomon was worth seven and one-half billion dollars. Do you know what he said? He had the finest musical instruments obtainable and hired the finest orchestras to play them, but after hearing them he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Then he hired the finest singers, and said the same thing after they sang. Then he had beautiful gardens built, with everything the heart could wish for, and after looking at all of them, he repeated the same words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

God is very kind to you and me, wonderfully kind! He has let others get everything that you and I may wish we had, and then He has reported to us what they said after they had them. They said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This rich man wasn't satisfied.

### **The Second Rich Man**

In Luke 18:18, we read of a rich man who had great riches, and wanted to keep them. We read in verse 23 that "he was very rich." This means he had plenty. But notice, this man had common sense, for he went to the Lord Jesus. Although he had great riches, he knew that he did not have eternal life. What a revelation to the soul that a huge bank

account, with no debts, and plenty of everything does not purchase or provide for eternal life! Also notice, he knew where it could be found. Why don't you go to Him, too? Go and kneel before the Lord Jesus, and say, "I have come to get this marvelous, wonderful, precious gift of eternal life that my soul needs so badly."

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him . . . Thou knowest the commandments . . . And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up." He knew the commandments, but he didn't know the One who gave them. He had kept them, he thought, and he could say something that most of us cannot say, but he knew he didn't have eternal life.

Why not be honest? We have a human life, for we can understand human things. I can understand music, electricity, printing, furniture-making, watch-repairing, laundry business, tent and awning business, but that never gave me eternal life. My human spirit enables me to understand human things, but I had to get a new life from God to understand divine things. This man had money, but he knew he couldn't buy that new life. He had position and power, why didn't he command it? Because he knew that he could not command it. Why didn't he educate himself into it? Because education can never bring inspiration and eternal life. He had to go to Jesus Christ for that.

Why don't you learn the lesson this man learned? This man, with all his riches, felt he needed eternal life. How much more should you feel your need for it! Most of us have had disappointments. We could write a book on our troubles. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Go right to Him. This man knew that trying to keep the Ten Commandments did not give him eternal life. Has it given eternal life to you?

Have you ever noticed that "law keepers" never love the Lord Jesus? Those who command you to keep the sabbath, and join something, and do this and that, never sing about the Lord Jesus. They spend their time talking about ordinances, and do not know the beauties of the lovely Lord. They never have been saved. Only those who are saved by Him talk about Him.

You have riches and business and power and lands and cattle and cash to spend, but there is something lacking, young man: "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). The Lord presented two propositions: Himself and His gifts. All the young man had he got from God. Christ asked, "Will you have the Giver or the gifts? If you

would rather have the Giver, go sell all that you have, and give the money away, and follow me."

For which did the rich man care the most? Did he care for the Lord Jesus and a home with Him? No, he believed that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." He kept the gifts, but had no further interest in the Giver.

Suppose God should allow you to receive a telegram today advising you that you had been left ten million dollars in cash. Would you go to church next Sunday? Ten million dollars in cash—your own! Which would you rather have, the gift or the Giver?

### **The Third Rich Man**

We read of our third rich man in Luke 16:19-31. He got the gifts and the riches all right, but he held on to the gifts, and had no interest in the Giver. When he died, he left all his riches on earth, and when he got into eternity he started to beg from a beggar. The beggar had what the rich man did not have. He took his Saviour into eternity, and the rich man left all he trusted behind. The beggar had become rich, and the rich man had become a beggar.

This rich man had lived for years. He was wise in the ways of the world, and had made money, but he spent it all on his body, and was not rich toward God. He cared well for his body, but forgot that he had a soul. He left God, Christ, and the Bible out.

Do you know why the Lord in His lovingkindness has left these records for us? So we won't do the same thing. How good and kind and gracious to bring these things before us! One grasped after riches and was not satisfied; one got them and was not satisfied; and one got all that he wanted, but died and left them behind to become a beggar in eternity. The one who has Christ can sing, "I've tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but all their waters failed. Now none but Christ can satisfy."

### **The Beautiful Girl Sold Her Beauty**

There is a girl in Kansas City whose riches were her beauty. But when she was twenty years of age she sold her beauty. When I went to see her ten years later in a hospital, her beauty was gone. "I have come to tell you the story of the Lord Jesus," I began, "but where has your beauty gone, sister?"

"I don't know," she replied, "but I'm an old hag now and nobody wants me." The world took her riches from her.

I approached a man one day in Kansas City, as I noticed him walking along the street, his head bowed and his shoulders drooped. "How do you do," I said; "I am your friend; let me shake your hand." He was the former Mayor of Kansas City. When the President of the United States visited Kansas City, this man introduced him.

"If I have a friend in Kansas City, I don't know it," he responded. The world had robbed him of his honor.

One of our prominent bankers in the United States died recently. He had formerly owned two banks, but they both had failed, and at the time of his death he was losing his home. The world robbed him of his wealth.

Can anybody take away the riches you have? Or have you "riches in glory by Christ Jesus" that no one can take away from you? Anything outside of Christ Jesus you can and will lose. Health and wealth will pass away, "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Make sure that you are rich in good works and rich toward God.

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