

Overcoming Materialism

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 2247

INTRODUCTION

1. Matthew 6:25-34

Here is the setting for our lesson: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, be not anxious saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be, therefore, not anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil."

2. Matthew 6:19-24

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be healthy, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and money."

B. The Perspective

Both of these passages deal with physical commodities and material possessions. Verses 19-24 deal with luxury and verses 25-34 deal with necessity -- what we eat, drink, and wear. The first portion is directed more at the rich, those who tend to take their luxury and stockpile it for their own ends. The second is directed more at the poor who, due to their poverty and lack of substance, question or doubt God, and live in fear and anxiety about what they will eat, drink, and wear.

Now, being rich has its share of problems, just as being poor has its share. The temptation to the rich is to trust in riches, while the temptation to the poor is to doubt God's provision. But in both cases the Lord is saying, "I have a perspective for you. If you are rich or poor, your focus is to be on Me." For example, in verse 21 He says, "Put your treasure in heaven because that is where I want your heart." In verse 33a He says, "But seek ye first the kingdom...." In other words, "Put your heart in heaven and don't worry, I will give you what you need. I want you to have a focus." The focus of the rich in the world is to lay up treasures on earth (v. 19). The focus of the poor in the world is to seek after what they will eat, drink, and wear for clothing. If you are rich, pursue a heavenly investment; if you are poor, pursue the kingdom of God. When it comes to money and possessions, our focus is to be

on God and not on possessions. We are not to grasp and claw after things, we are to seek God and allow Him to fulfill His promises and provisions to us.

Now, I want to give you an introduction to the second section (vv. 25-34) that deals with necessities. Let's look first at...

I. THE TEST OF SPIRITUALITY

Managing money and possessions is a severe problem for all of us. We all have different amounts of money by God's design. But we all have the same problem: What do we do with it? How should we invest it? How should we spend it? We have to constantly face the fact that money provides for us a test of true spirituality. I can tell you more spiritually about a man or woman simply by the way they handle their physical properties. It is a great revealer of the heart. It is a major problem in life, and when somebody can deal with it, the strength of their spiritual life is manifested.

For example, the Lord gave thirty-eight parables in the Gospels. Out of those thirty-eight, sixteen are in regard to how we handle our money. Christ said more about money and possessions than about heaven and hell combined. In the Gospels, one out of every ten verses deals with money or possessions -- 288 verses in the four Gospels. In the Bible there are over five hundred references to prayer, less than five hundred references to faith, but there are over two thousand references to money and possessions. It is a major issue.

A. The Trauma of Technology

1. The Product - Unlimited Resources

It is not any easier for us now than it was in Bible times...if anything, it's tougher. We live in a day when technology has provided for us an incredible amount of unlimited resources. For example, there has never been a society in the history of the world that has had as many commodities and products as we have. And in America, we probably have more than any other part of the world. We are living in affluence that is unheard of in the world's history. Modern technology has increased our comprehension of devices and designs to the point where we can now create almost anything short of life itself.

2. The Problem - Ultimate Self-Destruction

But our incredible affluence and development of commodities has revealed a major problem: man cannot handle what he produces. We cannot handle our money or our commodities. In the very simplest sense, we are in the process of ultimate self-destruction. Now, all of us are very much aware of where our country and the world is going with all of the economic and financial problems we have. But the problems are not economic and financial. That is why nobody can come up with the right solution.

The problem is this: If man creates an environment with unlimited resources and unlimited commodities, man will destroy himself. There is a basic truth about man that must be recognized: he is ultimately and totally selfish. Selfishness related to productivity translates into one word -- greed. When the sinful heart of man is egged on by selfishness and attaches itself to products, it becomes greed, and self-destruction is the ultimate end. For example, in Revelation 18 the entire world economic system will end in a total collapse. Man is on a track to total self-destruction. When man continues to proliferate the potential to make money and proliferate products, he is given that which feeds the worst thing about him -- his selfishness and greed.

B. The Trap of Technology

It always amazes me how many places carry things that nobody can use. We are maniacal in our desire for things. We are egged on by the media and man is trapped in the unbelievable hypocrisy of the system. He has been told all of his life that he can only be happy when he obtains all the commodities he possibly can. Now he is told that he cannot have them. So, he is being forced to be unhappy. We are in this mess because this society produced its potentiality with the help of the evil of man's heart. Through the television, radio, and billboards, this society has been telling us that we

will be happy when we have things. Now they tell us that we can't have our things. What hypocrisy!

1. The Philosophy of the World

The key philosophy of life in the world is this: Only as you accumulate enough assets to satisfy your particular style of life can you really be happy. We have a society of people who have determined what assets they want. We even have sub- cultures who desire strange things.

a. Seeking the Assets I saw a sign on a guy's shirt I could not believe: "Next to sex, I like Harley-Davidsons best." That is the way he read life. If he could just get enough money to get the right girl and the right machine he was happy...he thought. If we can just get a fancier car, a new wardrobe, take a trip, or get a bigger house, we can be happy. This is exactly what the media pumps at us all the time. We see the big ads that say they are going to put a "Caspar Milquetoast" into this hot car and he will turn into a macho man whom all the girls will scream at as he goes down the street. If you look kind of tacky around the house with your bathrobe, just buy the new fashions. Now they are telling us that we can't have it anymore.

b. Stealing for Assets People say, "There is so much thievery today. Why, man is getting worse." That is not the issue. When he is continually told that he has to have commodities to be happy, ultimately he is going to steal for them. I am not interested in the world's solution because it is full of hypocrisy. When I am told to tighten my belt and to change my standard of living, I say, "That is not the issue. It is only the periphery. You have told us that we will never be happy until we can absorb the assets to make our style of life what we seek. Now that we have decided to live that way, you tell us not to. That is hypocritical!" Man has been lied to all along.

2. The Philosophy of Christianity

Sadly, Christians have bought this philosophy. We even think that happiness comes in commodities. Christianity has become big business. Richard Quebedeux says that Christians are guilty of upward social mobility. We are trying so hard to climb the ladder to hobnob with the rich and famous. But that is not what our Lord said. Our heart is to be in heaven because our treasure is there. We will not find happiness in our lives in commodities. Now, I am not against those commodities, I just don't seek for them. If God chooses to give us things, it is due to His good and gracious hand; but if we make those things the love of our life, we have missed His blessing because we have been lied to about where real contentment is found.

Philippians 4:11-12 paraphrased says, "Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want" (LB). Paul says, "I have contentment that is absolutely and totally unrelated to possessions." The believer seeks the kingdom and God takes care of the possessions; he puts his treasure in heaven and the Lord takes care of his need.

With this in mind, let's look at...

II. THE TREASURE OF CONTENTMENT

Jesus directed much of His speaking to the covetous Pharisees and scribes. They were in it for the money. They had turned the temple into a big, fat, prospering business. They were rich and they had the jaded perspective of the world that you will be happy and content only when you have accumulated enough wealth to satisfy your desired life-style.

A. The Trust of Contentment

The Bible says that your contentment is apart from goods and commodities. Your contentment is found in God. There are three words that relate to the issue of contentment with God:

1. Ownership

God is the sole owner of everything. He owns your clothes, your shoes, your watch, your house, your car, your kids, your garden -- everything. He owns it all.

a. The Passages 1) Psalm 24:1a -- "The earth belongs to God; everything in all the world is His!" (LB). 2) 1 Chronicles 29:11b -- "...Everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord, and this is

your kingdom" (LB). If I am going to be content in life as a Christian, then the first thing I have to realize is that everything belongs to God. As a result, I can never gain anything because it is His. In order to learn to be content you must recognize that God is the sole owner of everything.^b The Pattern If you believe for one minute that you own one single possession, then that possession will govern your spiritual attitudes. Let me give you an illustration.¹) A Smashed Van We have a van which we enjoy as a family because we have four kids. Now I think it is important to take care of that van because it costs a lot to buy another one. If I say, "This is my van. I'm going to take care of my van," and my van is traveling along the road when somebody comes through an intersection and smashes my van, then I am going to be very upset with the turkey that ran into my van. Then I am going to find out the inevitable -- he has no insurance and my sanctification will flee further from my grasp. Then I am going to take it to the body shop and they won't match the paint properly and I will get it back with a big streak on the side so then I will be upset with him. Then I will be traveling down the street on an angle because the frame was bent and that will wear out my tires and cost me money. But it is not my van, so if somebody runs into it I say, "Lord, You should be careful how You take care of Your van. Sorry this happened to Your van. I hope You have the resources to get it fixed." I have to deal with things in my life either from my perspective or His. As long as it is His, I don't worry.²) A Burned House John Wesley was away from home one day when a terrible tragedy was reported to him: his house had just burned down. He said, "The Lord's house burned. One less responsibility for me."^c The Principle That is the right approach, but it is not what we have been taught. The accumulation of property is the legacy of the world to us and we need to change that perspective. We do not own anything. I don't own my house, my car, or my children. Therefore, if I lose something, I didn't really lose it because I never owned it. If someone needs something, they are just as welcome to it as I am because I don't own it -- the Lord does. If the Lord knows they need it -- it's theirs. I have to begin with the understanding that God owns everything. But that is a problem for Americans because the concept of capitalism and the right to ownership of private property is an American legacy. We are so willing to stand up and fight for it that we forget that it is not a Christian principle.

The Elements of Stewardship

In 1914 a man named Harvey Calkins wrote a book entitled *The Elements of Stewardship*. He said that we have received a heritage of ownership from our society and not from the Bible. He said, "There has been but one nation whose concept of property ownership was based on ownership by a personal God, and that nation was Israel. All the other nations we have knowledge of (the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans), their underlying philosophy of the ownership of property, and their laws relating to property, were based on the concept of the individual owning what he possessed. "Where did we receive our standards of property ownership? It is rooted in the law of the Roman empire. The Roman philosophy of life, crystallized in Roman law and through that law standardized in Christian civilization, was not built on 'the law of the Lord -- ownership by God'; it was based on the laws of man -- ownership by man.

"The average man, unless he has met the issues squarely and jarred himself loose from inherited traditions, remains caught in a false concept of property ownership. His Christian instinct is entangled with the honest belief that he is the owner of what he has merely been given to possess. His whole history and entire culture compel him to believe that he is the owner of his property." That is not true because, in a real sense, you don't own anything and neither do I. If I don't own anything, then I don't mind if I lose it.

The first word in understanding contentment with God is ownership, the second is...

2. Control

The first thing you have to understand is that God owns everything, the second thing is that He

controls everything. He is the Owner and the Controller. For example, the Old Testament gives special attention to the fact that God controls all circumstances for His own ends.

a. I Chronicles 29:11b-12 -- "...We adore You as being in control of everything. Riches and honor come from You alone, and You are the Ruler of all mankind; Your hand controls power and might, and it is at your discretion that men are made great and given strength" (LB). In other words, "God, You control everything. You control riches, You control honor, You control power and might and greatness and strength. You call all the shots."b. Daniel 2:20-21a -- "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for He alone has all wisdom and all power. World events are under His control" (LB).c. Daniel 6 -- When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, this kind of theology held him in good stead. When he was in the lions' den he was in utterly terrible circumstances. I can't imagine anything worse than being dropped into a pit with a bunch of hungry lions. There were enough of those lions to devour a whole family of relatives before they hit the bottom of the pit. Daniel had a wonderful time -- he was at ease, relaxed; he probably laid down on a nice big furry lion and went to sleep. Meanwhile, the king, who was in perfect circumstances living in the Babylon palace as the greatest monarch in the world, couldn't eat, sleep, drink, or be entertained. Why? Daniel knew that in everything God was in total control. The other guy was a wreck because he had no sense of a divine controller and the circumstances were beyond his control. If you know God owns and controls everything, then you will not put your hope in luxury and you will not fear for your needs. God knows what you need -- He will provide all your needs "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19b). He will take care of everything that is necessary for your life. God will dispense to you what He knows you must have in order to invest in His kingdom. That is not your worry.

There is a third word:

3. Provision

Ownership, control, and provision. God owns everything and He controls everything to provide for His own.

The Old Testament gives God many names, but one of the most lovely of the names of God is Jehovah-jireh (Gen.22:14). It means "the Lord who provides." It is so much a characteristic of God that it is His name. We would never argue that God is love and glorious and great and mighty and holy and just and good, but some would argue that God provides. They question and doubt and are afraid that God isn't going to meet their needs. This is exactly what the Lord speaks to in Matthew 6:25-34 when He says, "Don't worry about what to eat, drink, or wear." The Lord is still Jehovah-jireh. That is His name and is synonymous with one of His attributes.

God is a God who provides and that is why David said, "I have never seen God's people begging bread" (Ps. 37:25b). Paraphrased, Luke 12:30 says, "All mankind scratches for its daily bread." The world digs and scratches and claws and hoards to make sure it has enough, but in opposition, your Father knows your needs and He will always give you what you need every day. What a promise! I don't have to own everything and I don't have to control everything in order to meet my need. I can receive what God gives me to invest in His eternal kingdom and put away all anxiety about my needs. I can worship God with my life and have the absolute promise that He will provide everything beyond what I need. First Timothy 6:8 says, "If we have food and covering, with this let us be content." Are you content, or do you grasp for more and deny God in the process?

A Little Piece of Bread

In World War II the death of many adults left many orphans. At the close of the war, the allies provided some camps for the orphans in order to feed them and to try to find a place to locate them. They began to develop and grow. They received the finest care and the finest food. But in one of these camps the officials became very perplexed because the children couldn't sleep. They would eat three good meals but at night they would lie awake. They brought in some psychologists to do a study of these orphans to find out why they couldn't sleep.

The psychologists came up with a solution. Every night when the little children were put to bed, someone would come down the row of beds and would place in each little hand a great big piece of bread. So, the last thing they would experience at night would be to close that little hand around the bread. In a matter of days they were all sleeping through the night. Why? Even though they were fed to the full during the day, their experience had taught them that there was no hope for tomorrow. They couldn't sleep in anxiety over what might happen the next day. They could not enjoy what they had because they were afraid of the future. When they had that little piece of bread tucked in their hand they knew that at least they would have breakfast the next day.

Do you know what God has done for us? I believe He has given us a piece of bread for our hand. That little piece of bread is this: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). If I have that little piece of bread in my hand I can sleep.

I don't need to stockpile or hoard for the future. God is the owner of everything in the world and He controls all the assets to provide for me because I am His child. That is why the Lord says, "Don't you know that your heavenly Father feeds the birds, and are you not much better than they" (Mt. 6:26)? If He feeds birds, He will certainly feed His own children. He is the Owner, the Controller, and the Provider. Life for the Christian consists not "in the abundance of things which we possess" (Lk. 12:15b), but in being "content with such things as we have" (Heb. 13:5b).

B. The Test of Contentment

If the Lord chooses to give me more, that is fine. I have to remember that it is His and it should be used for His glory and for His Kingdom.

1. Meeting the Need

Sometimes, when I recognize a need something says to me, "What about the future? You might run out of food. You don't know what might happen. Your children might get sick." But if someone has a need and I have the resource to meet that need, that is no decision for me. I am going to take the resource that God owns and use it in His way to provide for the one in need. In the future God will have to provide for me in another way.

2. Releasing the Resources

Some people can't make that decision. We tend to stockpile and hoard inordinate amounts. Now, it is not wrong to plan for the future -- I think God expects us to. The book of Proverbs affirms this. But, when you cling to your possessions, when your hope and faith are in them, and when you live in fear of not having them, then you can't release them because you feel they are yours. When I see a need and someone makes an appeal, there is just something in me that wants to give in that direction. I don't always think about the future. Short of being foolish, I think that is the way we have to learn to live.

3. Pouring the Treasure

Amassing money and possessions provides no contentment. To be contented is to pour your treasure into a heavenly vault where it will pay eternal dividends. To be content is to not worry about what you eat, or drink, or what you shall wear, but to hold in your hand that little piece of bread that says, "My God shall supply all your needs." Then whatever resources I do have I will make available to whoever needs them.

So, a right relationship with God is at the bottom of true contentment -- trusting Him as Owner, Controller, and Provider. The Bible's answer to inflation, to greed, to stealing, to selfishness, and to pride is to believe that God will meet your every need. After all, He is your Father. I dare say that the reason those little orphans were afraid was that they were orphans. They didn't have a father to provide -- we do.

Finally, let's look at...

III. THE TRIALS OF MATERIALISM

It is not wrong to have possessions. It is not wrong to have money. But it is wrong to covet, cling, and build your life around them. I believe that this is a major issue facing the church today. Christianity, instead of offering an alternative, instead of being distinct, and instead of being apart from the world, has become materialistic and self-indulgent in many ways. It is a fearful thing. I am not sure that Christians are willing to be the offscouring of the world anymore (I Cor. 4:13).

A. Posh Christianity

John White has written a very helpful book called *The Golden Cow*. In it he says that we have bowed down to the golden cow of materialism and we need Christ to make a whip and cleanse the temple all over again. He also says:

"The twentieth-century church has also forgotten which master she belongs to, painting herself like a hussy in her silly pursuit of Lord Mammon. Or, to use another image, the church has gone a-whoring after a golden cow.

"Not a calf, if you please, but a cow. I call her a golden cow because her udders are engorged with liquid gold, especially in the West where she grazes in meadows lush with greenbacks. Her priests placate her by slaughtering godly principles upon whose blood she looks with tranquil satisfaction. Anxious rows of worshipers bow down before their buckets. Although the gold squirts endlessly the worshipers are trembling lest the supply of sacrificial victims should one day fail to appease her.

"I used to be angry with my fellow fundamentalists and outraged at certain evangelical institutions because of their materialistic attitudes. But my rage has long since subsided. I even went through a charitable and patronizing stage. May God forgive me. Who am I to rage or to patronize?

"I know some children whose mothers are whores. Can you imagine what it feels like to discover your mother goes to bed with men for money? In point of fact such children feel a variety of emotions, ranging from indifference to bitter rejection to shame to (occasionally) hurt mingled with compassion. It's hard to quit loving your own mother, even if she is a whore. You've only got one.

"Fundamentalism is my mother. I was nurtured in her warm bosom. She cared for me with love and taught me all she knew. I owe her (humanly speaking) my life, my spiritual food and many of my early joys. She introduced me to the Savior and taught me to feed on the bread of life. Our relationship wasn't all honey and roses, but she was the only mother I had. I clung to her then and find it hard not to lean on her now. If she let me down at times I'm old enough to realize that no mother is perfect. But to find out that she was a whore, that she let herself be used by mammon, was another matter. And as the wider evangelical movement gradually took her place in my life it was painful to make the same discovery twice."

That is very potent and true. I believe that churches today face a tremendous amount of collective materialism on the part of their members. We are all like the man in Luke 12:16-18 whom the Bible says kept building bigger and bigger barns. This is not for Christians. Where can we get our distinctness if we fall prey to the thinking that so dominates the world?

B. Posh Pastors

I am not saying we are to be poor. For example, take the preacher. Some people think the preacher ought to be very poor, that it will make him into a man of prayer. Other people think the preacher ought to be very rich because he will attract rich people who will feed the budget.

John White talks about this: "What would be wrong with giving him fifty percent more than whatever sum seems reasonable? Are you afraid it might make him too money conscious? If so, what business did you have in appointing him? If you are in a position to pick a pastor, you should also know that God expects you to discern whether he has a weakness about money. And if he has a weakness about money, you should never have given him the responsibility of a pastorate (I Tim. 3:3)!"

"Some churches like to give high salaries because the pastor's standard of living will affect the kind of people who will attend. (Posh pastor; fancy congregation.) God is concerned with motives not with amounts. Do you resent the thought of your pastor having too much money? Then double his salary!"

To show him you love him. But aren't there better ways of showing love? Of course there are, but why not show him love in these ways too? Do you ask me what happens if the salary is too much for him? I answer, that's the pastor's problem. He could give more money away, for instance. Pray that he may have wisdom in handling what he doesn't need."

Grace Community Church pays me too much money. Several years ago I asked one of the elders, "Why do you pay me so much money?" He said, "Because we want to see what you do with what you don't need." That's fair. I have that responsibility. It is not a question of how much you have, it's a question of where your heart is.

C. Posh Guests

It is amazing, but in Christianity today there are people who will come and speak at our church at a minimum fee of five thousand dollars. There are people who want to come and sing and they charge eight thousand dollars and up. Now, not all of them are like that. But there are even people who will give a testimony for Christ for fifteen hundred dollars. I talked to a publisher recently who told me that in order to get an author to write a Christian book for them they had to pay him a two hundred thousand dollar advance before he would sign on the dotted line. Books are a wonderful ministry, but if you write a book to make money, that is a wrong motive. If you write a book to honor God and to advance His kingdom, and He chooses to give you money, that is the right motive and the result is a blessing. Then use that money as His possession under His control to provide for His body.

All your money and possessions you don't need to meet your needs because God will do that. So, why do you have have your house, your car, and your bank account? It is a test of your spirituality. How are you doing? That is the issue. You don't need it because God is going to take care of you. God is testing the legitimacy of your spiritual claim by your possessions. I believe that the best revealer of true spirituality is money. And that is the Lord's intention -- how do we handle luxury (Mt. 6:19-24), and how do we handle necessity (Mt. 6:25-34).

A careful reading of the Bible will reveal that rich people are condemned. But they are never condemned for their riches, only for the misuse of it. We live in a society where we have riches. May God help us not to misuse them. Poor people are also condemned in the Bible, not because they are poor, but because they question God's equity and love. Being poor is a test of trust as is being rich. When you have it, you trust in it; when you don't have it, maybe you have failed to trust God.

Possessions and money are a spiritual test.

I hope you will examine yourself as to your attitude toward luxuries and necessities. Proverbs 30:8b-9 says, "...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (NIV). It is a test whether you have it or not. The one who has it is tempted not to trust God; the one who doesn't have it is tempted to dishonor His name.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What are the temptations that affect both the poor and the rich? What is the proper perspective for both of these groups of people?
2. What is the test that money allows every Christian to take?
3. What is the major problem that has been revealed as a result of our incredible affluence? Why is it a problem?
4. Explain the trap that man has fallen into as a result of the technology of the world.
5. Why do many Christians seek after material possessions rather than the things of God?
6. On what three things is our contentment with God founded?
7. How much does God own? Support your answer.
8. What is the danger when you think that you own something?
9. What is the legacy that has been handed down to us from history?
10. How much does God control? Support your answer.

11. Why was Daniel so relaxed and unafraid when he was in the lions' den?
12. Why does God own everything and control everything?
13. What does the Christian life consist of?
14. How should the Christian use what God has given him?
15. What is a major issue that faces Christianity today? Explain.
16. Why don't you need the money and possessions you presently have?
17. Why are both the rich and the poor alike condemned in the Bible?

Pondering the Principles

1. Have you ever had anything stolen? Have you ever had your car hit by someone when you were not at fault? Have you ever been struck by some tragedy, such as losing your house or your business? How did you respond? How should you have responded? Make a list of the things you have learned about the fact of God's ownership of everything. How can you apply these things to those things that are presently in your possession? What necessary changes do you need to make in regard to your perspective of these things? If you are still holding on to something as if it is yours, take this time right now to give it back to God, recognizing His ownership. Thank Him that He has seen fit to bless you with it.
2. Read Philippians 4:6-19. Why does Paul say you should be anxious for nothing? What should be our priority as Christians? What kind of example does Paul provide for us? Why was Paul content? What were the "all things" he could do through Christ? According to verse 19, what happens to those who risk their future well-being by giving of their possessions to meet a need? What needs are you aware of that exist presently in the body of Christ? Do you have the resources to meet one of those needs? If so, is there anything that should prevent you from meeting that need? Ask God to give you the wisdom to best employ the resources He has given you to meet that need. Then thank Him for the privilege.
3. Are you content with what God has blessed you with, or do you seek to possess more things? What is wrong with this kind of attitude? According to Matthew 6:20-21, where do you find true contentment? Would you covenant with God right now to begin to stockpile your treasures in the heavenly vault and not the earthly one?

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