

Two Lives, Two Destinies

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

We may sometimes look around at the things we see happening in the world and wonder why God has ordered His creation the way He has. We see that there are those individuals to whom God has given great wealth, or those to whom God has given some exceptional talent, ability or opportunities by which they are able to obtain some measure of wealth, prestige, prominence, or power for themselves.

At the same time, we see others who struggle in life. For these the ability to obtain wealth and sometimes even the ability to make ends meet seems to be out of reach. Many of us as believers may look at those who have been given so much of what the world values and esteems highly, and we may find ourselves wondering why God does not give us more of the “good things in life”, so that our burdens might be eased, and so that we could enjoy more of what many would call “the good life”.

An Interesting Interview

Years ago, an interview was conducted by a very well-known individual at the time, who interviewed many of the world's most prominent and accomplished people. On this occasion he was interviewing one of the world's wealthiest men. This man was even more interesting to many because his wealth was not inherited. As believers, we understand that the means to obtain this great wealth was ultimately given to this man by God. However, from his perspective, he believed that his wealth was obtained by way of his own abilities and talents, which enabled him to take advantage of some chance opportunities that came his way.

During the interview, the host put the question to this very wealthy and accomplished man, asking him if he believed in God. As he pondered the question, looking slightly off to the right and just above the host who was seated opposite from him, he replied that he was not sure if there is a God. He went on to say that there might be a God, but he was not really sure. And once again fixing his gaze back on the host conducting the interview, he said that he tried to focus on things that he did know and understand, rather than on things he did not know.

This was a very interesting reply, and one that appeared to be candid, straightforward, and honest. Although God had given great material wealth to this man, in his own mind he did not even know whether God exists or not. In this present life he is tremendously wealthy, but from the perspective of the eternal, one who does not know God is a pauper. What an irony to contemplate.

A Contrary View of Blessing

In Luke 6:20-26 Jesus gave a teaching characterizing the lives of His disciples, whom He proclaimed to be those who are truly blessed by God. He spoke of the troubles they would endure, and He contrasted their lives with others who experienced many good things in life. In this passage we see that God's view of blessing is one that is very much contrary to the views and understanding of men. In Luke 16 Jesus gave us another very similar teaching. In this passage we read:

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were

falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'" (Luke 16:19-26)

How contrary this scenario is to the world's thinking and understanding. Most people would have considered the rich man to be blessed by God because of the many advantages he enjoyed in life, while they considered Lazarus to be under some sort of curse because of the afflictions and poverty he endured.

The Scripture says that Lazarus was laid at the rich man's gate, and so it is apparent he was not even able to walk, or to otherwise get around on his own. He was dependent upon others to take him wherever he needed to go. Since he was laid at the rich man's gate to beg, "longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table", it is again apparent that the extent of his infirmities was so severe that he was not able to work at anything by which he could have earned money to provide for himself. Added to these infirmities he was also "covered with sores", which the dogs came and licked. One could imagine that he seemed repulsive to all who saw him.

The rich man by contrast lived a life filled with "good things" in that he lived in luxury every day, having received many benefits in life. By the world's way of thinking, many would consider the "good things" enjoyed by the rich man to be evidence of God's acceptance of him and His approval of the life he lived, but such was not the case.

When the rich man saw Lazarus laid there by his gate, he may have wondered what this poor beggar had done to deserve such a miserable fate. At the same time, he may have imagined that God must be pleased with him because of the many material blessings he enjoyed. In the final analysis however, it was the poor, miserable, and afflicted beggar Lazarus who was accepted by God, and it

was the rich man, whom most would have considered to be blessed by God, who was ultimately rejected by Him.

Our Portion is Not in this Life

As believers, our portion is not in this life. Our portion is an inheritance in Heaven that will last forever. We may wonder why God has ordered and ordained things in His creation the way He has, and we may very much wish that He had done things differently. However, the ways and wisdom of God are beyond man's understanding, as the Bible teaches us in passages such as Romans 11:33, Ecclesiastes 8:16-17, and Ecclesiastes 11:5.

Since God in His wisdom has ordained that we must share in Christ's sufferings now, during our present lives, in order that we may also share in His glory in Heaven (John 12:24-26, Romans 8:17), we as God's people may well find ourselves among those who are poor, who hunger, and who weep now (Luke 6:20-21). We can expect that we will be hated, rejected and excluded by those of the world who do not know God.

We could also expect that our lives may be more characterized by having received our "bad things", rather than the many "good things" received by the rich man in Jesus' parable (Luke 16:25). When we consider the life of the rich man and the many material blessings he enjoyed in his life, let us also consider Psalm 17 where David prayed:

...Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,
From men with Your hand, O Lord,
From men of the world, whose portion is in this life,
And whose belly You fill with Your treasure... (Psalm 17:13-14).

We as believers are not among those whose portion and reward are in this life. Rather, we are among those who will weep and mourn in this life, while those who belong to the world will rejoice, as Jesus taught us in John 16:20-22. Now is our time of mourning as we share in the sufferings of Christ, but the day is coming for every believer when we will see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12), and then no one will ever take away our joy again. At that time, we will fully understand what God was accomplishing through all of the sufferings we endured. Until that day, God requires of us that we walk by faith, and not by the sight of that which can be seen and fully understood (2 Corinthians 5:7).

In Conclusion

In Jesus' parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, we are presented with a stark contrast in two very different lives lived, and we have what will seem to be a complete contradiction in the understanding of those of this world. On the one hand we have the rich man, a winner in the eyes of the world, and one whom the world would consider to be blessed by God, enjoying many luxuries and all of the benefits that material wealth can bring. On the other hand we have the beggar Lazarus, a loser in the eyes of the world, and one whom the world might consider to be under some sort of curse by God. He suffered great affliction in his body, and we would surely consider him as one who was poor, hungry, and who wept during his life (Luke 6:20-21).

In His teaching Jesus said: "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried." (Luke 16:22). From these words we might assume that Lazarus was never healed of his affliction, and that he remained a poor man until the day he died.

Ironically in the understanding of many, we see in this parable that the rich man was rejected by God, despite the many temporal blessings he enjoyed in life. And at the same time, we see that the poor, miserable, afflicted beggar Lazarus was known by God and accepted by Him. Let us all be mindful of these things when we encounter the afflicted during the course of our lives. When we come face to face with them, we may be looking at our brother or sister in the Lord. And let us also be mindful of these things when affliction comes into our own lives.

The Scriptures teach us that as believers we should not make valuations in our lives and assess the blessing of God in the same way that the world does. All of the valuations and ways of the world are contrary to the ways of God, as Jesus taught us when He said: "...that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15).