

If Only I Were Rich

Have you ever thought, "If only I were rich, I would be happy, and all my problems could be solved" . . . "if only I were rich, I could stop worrying about the future and enjoy some peace of mind" . . . "if only I were rich, etc., etc." ? Most of us probably have felt this way at some time. It seems that the things we want all have price tags, and we are inclined to think that if we had enough money we could have everything we might ever desire, and then we could find contentment.

It is interesting and ironic that history indicates that those who attain this much-sought-after goal have often been among the most miserable people on earth. The following has been related by a Mr. Lurie, of San Francisco, who was himself a millionaire:

In 1923, a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Hotel in Chicago. Present were:

president of the largest independent steel company,
president of the largest utility company,
greatest wheat speculator,
president of the New York Stock Exchange,
member of the President's cabinet,
greatest "bear" on Wall Street,
president of the Bank of International Settlements,
and head of the world's greatest monopoly.

Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the United States Treasury at that time, and for years newspapers and magazines had been printing their success stories and urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples.

Consider the status of each of these men only 25 years later:

The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life and died broke.

The president of the largest utility company, Samuel Insull, died broke and in semi-disgrace.

The greatest wheat speculator, Arthur Cutten, died abroad, insolvent.

The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, was recently released from Sing Sing Prison.

The member of the President's cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned from prison so he could die at home.

The greatest "bear" on Wall Street, Jessie Livermore, committed suicide.

The head of the world's greatest monopoly, Ivar Krueger, committed suicide.

All of these men learned how to make money, but not one of them had learned how to live. Their experiences underscore the truth of Jesus' statement, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth." (Lk 12:15)

Of course, having material things is not wrong in itself, even when one has them in abundance. Paul told Timothy to "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share . . ." (1Tim 6:17,18)

If our attitude is right, the more we have, the greater our capacity to do good and share. But we need to guard against the temptation of making it our life's goal to be rich in the false hope that this will assure happiness and fulfillment. This inordinate desire for riches is referred to by Paul in 1Tim 6:9,10:

"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang."

Leonard White