

# As in the Day of Slaughter



**H**ow many of you read the previous article in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* by Clement of Alexandria titled “Frugality: A Good Provision for the Christian”? He compared seeking this world’s riches to someone who crawls through life on his belly. Quoting the article:

*To the godly nature, living for good feelings in the body is a thing most alien; to regard sensual pleasure as a thing to strive for is the sign of utter ignorance of what is excellent. Love of wealth entices a man to stop feeling shame at what is shameful.*

First, I want all of you to know that I am not pointing a finger at anyone. This is something that I have felt has been a real challenge to me, and I don’t always live as frugally as I could. So, I don’t want you to feel condemned, but to take an honest look at our lifestyle. What is excessive living? I want to stir our mind today, to cause us to evaluate our standard of living. When we stand before the judgment bar, will the “rust” of our undistributed wealth keep us out of heaven? (I hope and pray that it does not.) Or perhaps we do not believe that God will pass judgment on those who have hoarded their wealth and not given to the needy? I want to look at some verses that challenge the comfort of our American Christian mindset.

Jesus said of the wealth-hoarding farmer who tore down his barns to build bigger ones, that he was a fool. That very night his soul was gone, and the accumulated wealth did not give him a relaxed, luxurious retirement after all.

What did he really do wrong? Hadn’t God blessed the crops so that there was such abundance? Certainly! But blessings are given to us so that we can share them with others. Let me repeat that: God gives us blessings so that we can in turn bless others. But, sadly, that man took it for granted that the blessings were all for his personal use.

Another story that I find very challenging is the story of Jesus observing how people gave money into the temple treasury. I think that we all believe in giving generously, but Jesus praised the widow who gave all that she had, “even all her living.” We might think that it certainly was not very practical of her to do that, since now she would probably have to beg for her next meal ... and really, what difference did her little bit make to the temple anyway, with all the rich people throwing in big bags of money. But Jesus said she put in more than all of them together. God’s accounting methods are different than ours! How often do I give until it affects what my wife can buy at the grocery store? Or what I can afford at the hardware store?

Or how often do I choose to spend just a little extra because the money is available? What do I name a necessity, and what do I call a luxury? By what standard do I gauge myself? Do I compare with those around me, or do I look at the Word of God? We are to be content if we have food to eat and clothes to wear. That is not a very extensive list! You name the luxury that appeals to you the most, and ask yourself this: why is it right for me to spend this money on myself? It could be a bigger house, a family vacation trip, a

new vehicle, a time to go out to eat, or just a cup of coffee or a soda. There are many more that could be named, but that is not the point. Isaiah also questions us: Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?

*Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Ja. 5:1-3*

“Treasure for the last days.” That sounds familiar. Retirement plans? Life savings? How much has America’s loud call to insure retirement wealth affected you? I know it has me! Accountants are repeatedly told in tax classes to advise clients to amass as much wealth for the future as possible, as we may not be able to depend on the Social Security system. How much does that affect the way I view the future? Does the bank’s billboard about feathering the nest egg affect me any differently than the non-Christian? Does my faith affect my life in practical financial matters?

*Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ja. 5:4*

What about the amount that I pay for work done for me? Am I willing to give a fair amount?

*Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ja. 5:5*

This verse really caught my attention. It makes me think of the story of Nabal shearing his sheep and butchering in a time of plenty, yet he was unwilling to share with David’s men. Haven’t we lived in pleasure and luxury compared to many others around the world? Back before the time of refrigerators and freezers, there would have been fresh meat to eat only near the day of butchering. Do we not live in the day of slaughter, as it were, with the fresh meat we regularly have available to us?

Turn to Amos 6, starting at verse 1. I have added some paraphrases to apply it to us.



(Refugee camp in Zaire)  
Haven’t we lived in pleasure and luxury compared to many others around the world?

*1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion (the USA), and trust in the mountain of Samaria (America), which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Am I at ease in America?*

*2 Pass ye unto Calneh (Japan), and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath (China) the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?*

*3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;*

*4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; (Make it personal.) We sleep on soft comfortable beds with a hand-crafted headboard, and have plenty of meat every day, which most of the world only has on rare occasion.*

*5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; We sing along with the latest gospel songs with the best of instrumental background on our personal MP3 player.*

*6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. We live in lack of nothing, yet we are not truly burdened with the souls who are turning their back on God.*

*7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. The day came when all of Israel’s luxuries were gone, and neither will America (without God) be able to provide for her own people.*

*8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.*

Wouldn’t many in this world consider our houses to be palaces? One missionary book I read said that the natives considered the mission house a mansion simply because they

had a concrete floor instead of dirt. If I had a concrete floor in my bedroom, I would consider it a necessity to also have some carpet on it. So I have to admit that I am influenced by the American dream.

For another word picture that our Lord painted for us, turn to Luke 16:19.

*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Lu. 16:19-31*

This is a very vivid, startling scenario. The only sin we know of in this rich man is his lack of compassion and sharing. Maybe he justified himself that he was sharing by allowing Lazarus to have the crumbs. Am I soothing my conscience with the giving of "crumbs," while I myself live a good life? Will we be satisfied with the good things in this life, or will we place more value on the treasures of heaven? When we hear the words of Jesus, will we repent of our selfish living? May we be doers of the Word, not just hearers!



**The only sin we know of in this rich man is his lack of compassion and sharing.**

The instructions for Timothy are good and fitting for us as well:

*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 1Ti. 6:6-12*

We get to lay hold on eternal life when we follow the things of God! When we follow the things of this world we get far less in comparison, and then we have the burden of protecting what we do get. With God, we have the assurance that our reward will not rust, rot, get moth-eaten, stolen, or lose its value. He is keeping it for us.

In summary, I think that abundance of money is not the problem; it is the act of selfishly desiring to keep it for ourselves. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Ps. 62:10 We must remember that the flesh lusts against the spirit and desires to pamper itself in any way possible ... and money makes many of those desires available. The *love* of money is the root of all evil. I would like to encourage anyone who is interested in a deeper study on this subject to read *Through the Eye of a Needle*,<sup>1</sup> by Roger Hertzler. I think he does a very good job of showing us the better way of living for Christ instead of feeding the desires of the flesh in wealth.

May we invest in the heavenly kingdom and find the true riches that last forever! There is no greed or selfishness in desiring these riches!

Your fellow soldier in Christ,

*Clifford Fox*

<sup>1</sup> Available in free pdf download at: <http://www.elcristianismoprimitivo.com/throughtheeyeofneedle.pdf>

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