

How to be Rich in Faith

International Bible Lesson

James 2:1-13

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“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5—KJV).

“Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?” (James 2:5—NRSV).

The Bible shows that many of the first followers of Jesus Christ came from among the poor. Jesus even foretold that it was difficult, but not impossible, for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus also warned that a person cannot love both God and money, that he will inevitably serve God or wealth; so the Pharisees who loved money ridiculed Him (Luke 16:13-14). James wrote in detail that those who love money instead of God may take unjust advantage of others, drag people into court, commit fraud, dishonor the poor, and cheat others in their wages; therefore, the cries of those cheated “have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (James 5:4). So, James warned churches and church leaders not to show partiality toward the rich or give them preference over the poor. The Bible shows how the poor can be rich in faith when loving and trusting God to meet their needs here and hereafter. However, the poor can also be tempted to love money instead of God. They may envy the rich; they may fall into class warfare; they may commit fraud or steal instead of trusting in and obeying God in their poverty. Whether rich or poor those who love God instead of money should pray and trust in God, should pray and seek God’s purposes for their lives, should pray and do the work God guides them to do, should pray and use their poverty or their wealth in the service of God and others.

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Thinking Further

1. How might showing favoritism make someone think that you do not “really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ”?
2. In addition to showing favoritism toward the rich, in what other ways might the church show partiality?
3. What possible mistake or mistakes can a church make when attempting to be impartial?
4. Why may it be difficult for a poor person to become a Christian? Why may it be easy for a poor person to become a Christian?
5. Why may it be difficult for a rich person to become a Christian? Why may it be easy for a rich person to become a Christian?