

**ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD,  
AKURE  
BIBLE STUDY, 10/10/2007**

**STUDY 6**

**LIMITATION OF RICHES**

Ecc. 5:9 – 20; Ecc. 6:1 – 12

This study is concerning the wealth of this world and the vanity and vexation that attend it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life (v. 9), but as for silver, and gold, and riches: they are unsatisfying (v. 10); unprofitable (v. 11); disquieting (v. 12); they often prove hurtful and destroying (v. 13); they are perishing (v. 14); they must be left behind when we die (v. 15, 16); and If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness (v. 17).

The royal preacher goes on further to show the vanity of worldly wealth, when men place their happiness in it and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches, in the hands of a man that is wise and generous, and good for something, but in the hands of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have. He has wealth (v. 2), he has children to inherit it (v. 3), and lives long (v. 3, 6). 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it; he has no power to eat of it, lets strangers devour it, is never filled with good, and at last has no burial (v. 2, 3). 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity, and a disease (v. 1, 2). 4. He prefers the condition of a still-born child before the condition of such a one (v. 3). The still-born child's infelicity is only negative (v. 4, 5), but that of the covetous worldling is positive; he lives a great while to see himself miserable (v. 6). 5. He shows the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind (v. 7, 8), and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves (v. 9), which, if they be gratified ever so fully, leave a man but a man still (v. 10). He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, That it is folly to think of making up a happiness for ourselves in the things of this world (v. 11, 12). Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God has given us, with an eye to him that is the giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates (v. 18–20). So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of this world (which two take up most of our time), so that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath days nor our week-days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, We have learned two good lessons.

**1. The vanity of riches**

Ecc. 5:9–7; Ecc. 6:1–6; Job 28:5; Psalm 68:8; Deut. 33:19; Hab. 2:5; Isaiah 5:8; 60:2; Ezek. 7:19; Luke 12:16–21; Prov. 1:19; Job 1:21; II Chro. 1:12; Psalm 49:17; I Tim.

6:7; Psalm 127:2; 73:7; 17:14; Hosea 7:9; 8:7; Prov. 3:16; Ecc. 3:20; Matt. 26:24; Jer. 8:2

The goodness of Providence is more equally distributed than appears to a careless observer. The king needs the common things of life, and the poor share them; they relish their morsel better than he does his luxuries. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy, much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires. The more men have, the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, and the more they will have hanging on them. The sleep of the labourer is sweet, not only because he is tired, but because he has little care to break his sleep. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, are sweet; having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully repose in God as his Rest. But those who have every thing else, often fail to secure a good night's sleep; their abundance breaks their rest. Riches do hurt, and draw away the heart from God and duty. Men do hurt with their riches, not only gratifying their own lusts, but oppressing others, and dealing hardly with them. They will see that they have laboured for the wind, when, at death, they find the profit of their labour is all gone like the wind, they know not whither. How ill the covetous worldling bears the calamities of human life! He does not sorrow to repentance, but is angry at the providence of God, angry at all about him; which doubles his affliction.

A man often has all he needs for outward enjoyment; yet the Lord leaves him so to covetousness or evil dispositions, that he makes no good or comfortable use of what he has. By one means or other his possessions come to strangers; this is vanity, and an evil disease. A numerous family was a matter of fond desire and of high honour among the Hebrews; and long life is the desire of mankind in general. Even with these additions a man may not be able to enjoy his riches, family, and life. Such a man, in his passage through life, seems to have been born for no end or use. And he who has entered on life only for one moment, to quit it the next, has a preferable lot to him who has lived long, but only to suffer.

## **2. The insatiableness of desire**

Ecc. 6: 7 – 12; Prov. 16:26; Ecc. 5:10; 2:15; Prov. 30:15–16; Ecc. 1:9,14; 3:15; 11:9; Gen. 5:2; 3:17–19; Psalm 9:20; Job 33:12; 9:32; 40:2; Isaiah 45:7; Hosea 12:1; Lam. 3:24–27; Micah 6:18

A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give satisfaction. The poor man has comfort as well as the richest, and is under no real disadvantage. We cannot say, Better is the sight of the eyes than the resting of the soul in God; for it is better to live by faith in things to come, than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things. Our lot is appointed. We have what pleases God, and let that please us. The greatest possessions and honours cannot set us above the common events of human life. Seeing that the things men pursue on earth increase vanities, what is man the better for his worldly devices? Our life upon earth is to be reckoned by days. It is fleeting and uncertain, and with little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. Let us return to God, trust in his mercy through Jesus Christ, and submit to his will. Then

soon shall we glide through this vexatious world, and find ourselves in that happy place, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

### **3. Grateful enjoyment**

Ecc. 5:18–20; 2:10,24; 3:22; 9:7; Job 14:5; Ecc. 5:20; I Tim. 6:17; II Chro. 1:12; Ecc. 3:13; 6:2; Deut. 28:8–12; Isaiah 64:5; Romans 5:1–5

Life is God's gift. We must not view our calling as a drudgery, but take pleasure in the calling where God puts us. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes employments easy, and afflictions light. Having made a proper use of riches, a man will remember the days of his past life with pleasure. The manner in which Solomon refers to God as the Giver, both of life and its enjoyments, shows they ought to be received and to be used, consistently with his will, and to his glory. Let this passage recommend to all the kind words of the merciful Redeemer, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Christ is the Bread of life, the only food of the soul. All are invited to partake of this heavenly provision.