

Psalm 49:1-20
The Emptiness of Abundance

Introduction: Do you ever feel haunted by the power and influence of the wealthy. We wrestle with the problem of prosperity. The riches of the world are seductive and deceptive, trying to pull our focus away from God. Jesus asked the question in Matt. 16:26, “What can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

1) To whom and why was this written—49:1-4

- a) A universal audience: written for all the Gentiles of the world—49:1-2
 - i) No one is exempt from listening to this wise teaching. This is applicable to all people at all times.
 - ii) The foolish use of wealth is not just a problem for white, privileged Americans. It is a universal problem.
- b) A universal teaching: written to make all the Gentiles think—49:3-4

2) Death is inevitable for all people; the dilemma is universal—49:5-13

- a) A rhetorical question from the wise—49:5
 - i) The glory of the wicked is temporary.
- b) The actions and attitudes of the foolish—49:6-13
 - i) Their wealth will not benefit them before God—49:6-9
 - (1) Remember Jer. 9:23-24.
 - (2) God has ultimate authority over life and death.
 - ii) Everyone dies, no matter how much they possess—49:10
 - (1) Death shows no respect for anyone. Death is the great equalizer.
 - iii) The wrong presupposition that wealth lasts forever—49:11-13
 - (1) They built massive pyramids by which they hoped to be remembered.
 - (2) They name streets and subdivisions after themselves or their children.
They name hospitals after generous donors, etc.

3) The futures of the unrighteous and the righteous contrasted—49:14-15

- a) The future destruction of the unrighteous—49:14
 - i) Hence the term sarcophagus (flesh-eating).
 - ii) Remember Luke 16:25.
- b) The future restoration of the righteous—49:15
 - i) Only God can redeem our entire life, not just the immaterial part of us.
 - ii) What a promise that God will receive us/take us to Himself. This is a strong hint of the resurrection from among the dead.

4) Remember that you can't take it with you—49:16-20

- a) Don't be intimidated/threatened by the wealthy—49:16
- b) The wealthy take nothing with them, not even their glory—49:17-18
 - i) This is why some foolishly invest in cryogenics (freezing parts of their body with liquid nitrogen (between -238 to -460 F) in the hope that someday they will be restored to life).

- c) They join their ancestors in eternal darkness—49:19
- d) They are like unwise animals—49:20 (cf. 49:12)

5) Things to remember (think, feel, do):

- a) The problem of the wicked is not their wealth, but their misplaced focus and faith.
 - i) It does no good to re-distribute the wealth to others, as some are foolishly suggesting.
- b) The hope of the righteous is better than the false security of the wicked.
- c) The destiny of the righteous is far better than the fleeting glory of the wicked.
- d) Jesus stated, “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matt. 19:23) It is only by the grace of God that anyone can enter.