

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(14) Ministry to the Rich (pages 209-216)

Summary:

Special efforts are to be made to reach out to the rich, who face special challenges in coming to the gospel, such as business entanglements and associations, overwhelming responsibilities, the glitter of earthly glory, lack of self-control, and the vanity of material things.

Thoughts:

In this chapter Ellen White addresses what you do with your money rather than how you got it (as in the book of James). The Wessels family became extremely wealthy, but she never speaks ill of them and how they got their wealth, perhaps because they were so generous with it. Today we are more aware that there are institutions and systems that keep people from flourishing. She doesn't address such institutional disparities. But we don't have to limit our concerns only to the things she addresses.

The kinds of things that Ellen White identifies as unique challenges that face the wealthy are now faced by nearly everyone in the West through the media and the internet. The lives of even the poorest today are way more complicated than a century ago, filled with responsibilities, temptations to abandon self-control and to envy the rich and famous, thereby focusing on attention from others and the vanity of material things. But the rich today still face one unique challenge. The poor can always dream that riches will solve their problems, the rich know that riches don't.

Because of their power and influence in everyday life, the rich and famous do not see the necessity of self-control in all things, thus they are in greater danger of habits that ruin both body and soul. Temperance work built on principle is needed with them. They need to understand how harmful indulgences lessen physical, mental and moral powers they have received in abundance. They can do a lot of good with the money that they spend on things that do them harm. (211)

The rich have the greatest capacity to benefit the needy, yet, absorbed in worldly treasure, they are often the least aware of the claims of God and the needs of others. They use their wealth to glorify themselves rather than change the world in a positive way. (212)

Those best fitted to work for the higher classes should study how to reach these people, how to awaken them to the needs of their soul for what the gospel offers. They are best won, not by elaborate arguments and expensive dress, but by a consistent, unselfish and winsome simplicity. (213-214)

Wealthy people, when converted to Christ, are well fitted to work for others of their class. (216)

It is interesting to compare Ellen White's description of Paul in Athens in *Acts of the Apostles* and *Ministry of Healing*. Her view of Paul's success or lack of it in Athens is more positive in the former than the latter.

One of the difficult things about reaching the rich is that it is hard for them to trust anyone. Most people who approach them have ulterior motives. The rich don't appreciate people trying to impress them or be like them. "Meeting the rich where they are" doesn't require big homes or flashy cars. The best way to work for the rich is to set an example of concern for the poor.

In the healing professions, how much money can one make and still have “acquired wealth honestly?” What does it mean today to gain riches honestly when systems so often favor one class over another?

Quotable Quotes:

“Few among [the rich] go to church; for they feel that they receive little benefit. The teaching they hear does not touch the heart. Shall we make no personal appeal to them?” (210)

“The cup most difficult to carry is not the cup that is empty, but the cup that is full to the brim. It is this that needs to be most carefully balanced. Affliction and adversity bring disappointment and sorrow; but it is prosperity that is most dangerous to spiritual life.” (212)

“Often prayer is solicited for those who are suffering from illness or adversity; but our prayers are most needed by the men entrusted with prosperity and influence.” (212)

“The Bible condemns no man for being rich, if he has acquired his riches honestly. Not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil.” (212)

“Some are especially fitted to work for the higher classes. These should seek wisdom from God to know how to reach these persons, to have not merely a casual acquaintance with them, but by personal effort and living faith to awaken them to the needs of the soul, to lead them to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.” (213)

“The way of worldly policy is not God’s way of reaching the higher classes. That which will reach them effectually is a consistent, unselfish presentation of the gospel of Christ.” (214)

“In the work for this class many discouragements will be presented, many heartsickening revelations will be made. But all things are possible with God.” (215)

“When it is made plain that the Lord expects them as His representatives to relieve suffering humanity, many will respond and will give of their means and their sympathies for the benefit of the poor. As their minds are thus drawn away from their own selfish interests, many will surrender themselves to Christ.” (216)

Tweets of Healing:

The poor can always dream that riches will solve their problems, the rich know that riches don’t.

Riches and worldly honor cannot satisfy the soul. (210)

Few among the rich go to church; for they feel that they receive little benefit. (210)

The cup most difficult to carry is not the cup that is empty, but the cup that is full to the brim. (212)

It is not money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil. (212)

It is by no casual touch or acquaintance that the wealthy can be drawn to Christ. (213)

All things are possible with God. (215)