

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Large Living Sinks Ships”

27:1-36

Is there really such a thing as a ‘lottery curse’?

You likely haven't heard about the sad case of Abraham Shakespeare. Winner in 2006 of a \$31 million lottery jackpot in Florida, he had spent away most of his fortune by the time he disappeared early in 2009.

His body was found last month under a concrete slab. A woman who had befriended him - and fleeced him for \$1.8 million, say police - has been charged in connection with his murder.

In Michigan Willie Hurt won \$3.1 million. Within two years after winning his fortune, in 1989, Hurt found himself divorced, penniless and charged with killing a woman over crack cocaine.

Ibi Roncaoli won \$5 million in Canada. Twelve years later, in 2003, Roncaoli had turned her fortune into a \$1 million debt. Her doctor husband, soon after discovering the financial mess, injected her with a lethal mixture of painkillers. In 2004 he was convicted of manslaughter.

Sudden wealth can be hard to handle. But so can not-so-sudden wealth. Truth is, **material prosperity of any kind can ruin you if you're not careful.**

The Bible has a lot of warnings about wealth. One of the strongest and most well-known is Paul's warning to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Here's the problem with wealth. It has a tendency to keep a person from having a dependency on God. In the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ the church at Laodicea was described as those whose wealth made them independent of God.

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -

Our text in Ezekiel gives us an example of those who trust in wealth “drown[ing] in destruction and perdition.” The city-state of Tyre will be likened to a great ship whose wealth is ultimately responsible for her sinking. The entire population drowns because of their dependance upon material things.

Ezekiel 27:1 The word of the Lord came again to me, saying,
Ezekiel 27:2 "Now, son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre,

A “lamentation” is a funeral song. It has a certain musical measure and is what we might call a ‘dirge.’ This chapter is a song sheet, the prewritten score for Tyre’s ultimate demise.

The very fact Ezekiel was told by God to “take up a lamentation for Tyre” reveals the heart of God. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked! As we are told by the apostle Peter in 2Peter 3:9, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to eternal life.

Let me pause to make a theological note. There is a theology that teaches as biblical, without embarrassment, that the idea that God is not willing that any should perish must be limited to only those He has predestined to be saved. Otherwise, they say, God cannot be sovereign because He wills for something that is not accomplished.

I came across this quote from C.H. Mackintosh¹ that I think you will enjoy.

Are... passages [like the one in 2Peter 3:9] to be taken as they stand, or are we to introduce qualifying or modifying words to make them fit in with our system? The fact is, they set forth the largeness of the heart of God, the gracious activities of His nature, the wide aspect of His love. It is not according to the loving heart of God that any of His creatures should perish. There is not such thing in Scripture as any decree of God consigning a certain number of the human race to eternal damnation. Some may be judicially given over to blindness because of deliberate rejection of the light. But all who perish will have only themselves to blame. All who reach Heaven will have to thank God.

If we are to be taught by Scripture we must believe that every man is responsible according to his light. The gentile is responsible to listen to the voice of creation. The Jew is responsible on the ground of the law. Christendom is responsible on the ground of the full-orbed revelation contained in the whole Word of God. If God commands all men, everywhere to repent, does He mean what He says, or merely all the elect? What right have we to add to, or alter, to pare down, or to accommodate the Word of God? None whatever.

Let us face Scripture as it stands, and reject everything which will not stand the test. We may well call in question the soundness of a system which cannot meet the full force of the Word of God as a whole.

As we read about Tyre, think about Nineveh! God sent Jonah there to preach her doom. But when they repented, God acted according to His large love, not willing that any should perish.

We see Tyre compared to a ship in verses three through eleven.

Ezekiel 27:3 and say to Tyre, 'You who are situated at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, thus says the Lord God: "O Tyre, you have said, 'I am perfect in beauty.'

Ezekiel 27:4 Your borders are in the midst of the seas. Your builders have perfected your beauty.

Ezekiel 27:5 They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; They took a cedar from Lebanon to make you a mast.

Ezekiel 27:6 Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; The company of Ashurites have inlaid your planks With ivory from the coasts of Cyprus.

Ezekiel 27:7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was what you spread for your sail; Blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was what covered you.

¹ http://www.biblecentre.org/topics/chm_calvinism_arminianism.htm

Ezekiel 27:8 "Inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; Your wise men, O Tyre, were in you; They became your pilots.

Ezekiel 27:9 Elders of Gebal and its wise men Were in you to caulk your seams; All the ships of the sea And their oarsmen were in you To market your merchandise.

Ezekiel 27:10 "Those from Persia, Lydia, and Libya Were in your army as men of war; They hung shield and helmet in you; They gave splendor to you.

Ezekiel 27:11 Men of Arvad with your army were on your walls all around, And the men of Gammad were in your towers; They hung their shields on your walls all around; They made your beauty perfect.

Are you a person who appreciates great literature? I don't know enough to put myself in that category but certain things really move me. We would always read J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* aloud to our kids. Sometimes I'd have to stop and re-read a section because the language itself was so beautiful.

People who study literature say that this chapter in Ezekiel is like that - one of the most beautiful in all ancient literature.

It's also full with ancient geography. You can spend hours or months or years mapping the places listed in these verses as ports and partners with the seafaring Tyrians.

I wanted to mention the beauty of the literature and the depth of the geography because we sometimes forget that the Bible is no slacker when compared to other books. However, as always, our main concern and emphasis is with the inspiration of the Bible and its application to us.

Tyre was a sea power, sending ships all over the known world to trade, and receiving ships from all over the world in her two main ports. So God likened her to a great seaworthy vessel made from all the finest materials. She was an example of all that the world had to offer: beauty and splendor and wealth and power and adventure.

Figures or illustrations are a powerful way to communicate truth. Matthew 6:19-21 employs a great figure to examine our priorities with regard to wealth.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

Matthew 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Here's an assignment for those of you with more creative minds. What might our nation be likened to? What image or figure?

The geo-political lesson continues in verses twelve through twenty-five.

Ezekiel 27:12 "Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods. They gave you silver, iron, tin, and lead for your goods.

Ezekiel 27:13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders. They bartered human lives and vessels of bronze for your merchandise.

Ezekiel 27:14 Those from the house of Togarmah traded for your wares with horses, steeds, and mules.

Ezekiel 27:15 The men of Dedan were your traders; many isles were the market of your hand. They brought you ivory tusks and ebony as payment.

Ezekiel 27:16 Syria was your merchant because of the abundance of goods you made. They gave you for your wares emeralds, purple, embroidery, fine linen, corals, and rubies.

Ezekiel 27:17 Judah and the land of Israel were your traders. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet, honey, oil, and balm.

Ezekiel 27:18 Damascus was your merchant because of the abundance of goods you made, because of your many luxury items, with the wine of Helbon and with white wool.

Ezekiel 27:19 Dan and Javan paid for your wares, traversing back and forth. Wrought iron, cassia, and cane were among your merchandise.

Ezekiel 27:20 Dedan was your merchant in saddlecloths for riding.

Ezekiel 27:21 Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your regular merchants. They traded with you in lambs, rams, and goats.

Ezekiel 27:22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah were your merchants. They traded for your wares the choicest spices, all kinds of precious stones, and gold.

Ezekiel 27:23 Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Assyria, and Chilmad were your merchants.

Ezekiel 27:24 These were your merchants in choice items - in purple clothes, in embroidered garments, in chests of multicolored apparel, in sturdy woven cords, which were in your marketplace.

Ezekiel 27:25 "The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise. You were filled and very glorious in the midst of the seas.

We are a great nation. Maybe the greatest ever. Having said that, we must realize that there have been great nations, great empires, in the past. Tyre was one. If we do not learn from her we will end up like her!

Our independence is never greater than when we are dependent upon God. No amount of wealth, or political clout, or military might, can substitute for things that are spiritual. We must be a nation not just “under God,” but right with God. Otherwise we will be an eagle shot from the sky.

Verse twenty-six is a transition from Tyre’s glory to her demise.

Ezekiel 27:26 Your oarsmen brought you into many waters, But the east wind broke you in the midst of the seas.

The Babylonian Empire is compared to the “east wind” that will break upon the ship of Tyre. Heavy-laden, she will not be able to survive the storm.

Verses twenty-seven through thirty-six sing of Tyre’s doom.

Ezekiel 27:27 "Your riches, wares, and merchandise, Your mariners and pilots, Your caulkers and merchandisers, All your men of war who are in you, And the entire company which is in your midst, Will fall into the midst of the seas on the day of your ruin.

Ezekiel 27:28 The common-land will shake at the sound of the cry of your pilots.

Ezekiel 27:29 "All who handle the oar, The mariners, All the pilots of the sea Will come down from their ships and stand on the shore.

Ezekiel 27:30 They will make their voice heard because of you; They will cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; They will roll about in ashes;

Ezekiel 27:31 They will shave themselves completely bald because of you, Gird themselves with sackcloth, And weep for you With bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

Ezekiel 27:32 In their wailing for you They will take up a lamentation, And lament for you: 'What city is like Tyre, Destroyed in the midst of the sea?

Ezekiel 27:33 'When your wares went out by sea, You satisfied many people; You enriched the kings of the earth With your many luxury goods and your merchandise.

Ezekiel 27:34 But you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters; Your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst.

Ezekiel 27:35 All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you; Their kings will be greatly afraid, And their countenance will be troubled.

Ezekiel 27:36 The merchants among the peoples will hiss at you; You will become a horror, and be no more forever.' " " "

Tyre was an example to the other nations of the madness of putting trust in things that are material. Did the other nations learn the lesson? Do they ever learn this lesson?

History is filled with the wreckage of nations that had the witness of God but disregarded it.

This attitude will play out in the future as well. The closing chapters of the Revelation of Jesus Christ describe a wealthy, powerful city, calling it Babylon, that will arise during the Great Tribulation. It will be the center of commerce and entertainment and politics and art and everything else. It, too, will fall, be destroyed, as the other peoples of the world watch.

We are wealthy. I'm not talking about our material wealth relative to the rest of the world. We are wealthy, rich actually, spiritually.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

When anyone accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior they are instantaneously enriched with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) and declared to be complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). The apostle Paul refers to these blessings as "the unfathomable riches of Christ" in Ephesians 3:8. "Unfathomable" means *past finding out, unsearchable, not to be tracked out*. That doesn't mean they cannot be listed. The idea is that the believer's blessings in Christ are too great to be measured.

All spiritual blessings and resources are yours to claim now, on earth. In the future, in Heaven, you have an inheritance waiting for you as well as a mansion and rewards.

Billy Graham tells a true story told him by a pastor he met in Glasgow, Scotland. There was a woman in this pastor's parish who was in financial difficulty and behind in her rent. So the pastor took up a collection for this poor woman at church, then went to her home to give her the money. He

knocked and knocked at the door, but there was no answer. Finally, he went away.

The next day he encountered the poor woman at the market. "Why, Mrs. Green," he said, "I stopped by your house yesterday, and I was disappointed that there was no answer."

The woman's eyes widened as she said, "Oh, was that you? I thought it was the landlord and I was afraid to open the door!"

The riches of God have been made available to us in Christ. The riches of God cannot help us until we open the door of our hearts

