THE QUESTION

Did early Christians think storing up wealth was wrong, and what are its dangers?

Asked by a THF member on April 11, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 45 early Christian passages and 143 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-early-christians-think-storing-up-wealth-was-wrong-and-what-are-its

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

Early Christians did not praise wealth for its own sake. They read poor in spirit as humility and warned that riches chain the heart, distract from prayer and feed greed. Wealth was put to right use when it was given freely to the poor, and the truly rich person was the one who gives.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 8

Poor in spirit means humble toward everyone

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Archelaus says Jesus did not simply bless people with little money but those free of pride. Chrysostom ties the first beatitude to a humility shown to friend and enemy alike.

1 “In that saying, however, Jesus did not mean those who are simply poor in worldly possessions, but those who are poor in spirit.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Archelaus,** *Disputation with Manes* 1 (c. 270–300 AD) **Source 37, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “Be humble toward everyone, whether friend or enemy, whether great or small. This is humility.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 9 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 40, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Outward poverty is blessed when it serves righteousness

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement keeps both Gospel sayings together. Being poor in spirit or in outward life can be blessed, but only when it is for righteousness' sake and chosen by people who turned from worldly honor.

3 “And blessed are the poor, whether in spirit or in outward circumstances, that is, if it is for righteousness' sake. He does not simply call the poor blessed, but those who have chosen to become poor for righteousness' sake.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 4.6 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 8

Love of property can chain the soul

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian describes believers who could not stand firm in persecution because their goods held them back. He says a person with nothing in the world to lose cannot be overcome by the world.

4

"A blind love of one's own property has deceived many. They could not be ready, or at peace, when it was time to leave, because their wealth held them like a chain."

later in the same passage

"Nor could the world overcome a man who had nothing in the world by which he could be overcome."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 27, page 8 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 4 OF 8

Stored riches give false security

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian uses the rich fool as a warning. The man celebrated his full barns on the very night his life was taken, so his stored goods did him no good.

5

"He teaches us that riches are not only to be looked down on, but are also full of danger."

later in the same passage

"The fool, who was going to die that very night, was rejoicing in his stored goods; and he, whose life was already failing, was thinking about the abundance of his food."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 28, page 8 **Read it in the library ›**

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POINT 5 OF 8

Wanting more is the root danger

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom calls love of wealth a very great sin and urges those who want to grow their possessions to stop their greed. Polycarp repeats the warning that love of money is the root of evils, since we take nothing with us.

6 “Let us listen, all of us who want to make our present possessions greater. Let us listen, and at some point stop our greed, so that we may not hear the same words they will hear.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Hebrews* 24 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 42, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

7 “Therefore, knowing that "as we brought nothing into the world, so we can take nothing out," let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness; and let us first teach ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 5, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Riches weaken a rich man's prayer

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas observes that wealth can leave a person poor toward God. Busy with his riches, the rich man prays little and weakly.

8 “The rich man has much wealth, but he is poor in matters relating to the Lord, because he is distracted by his riches.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 3, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 7 OF 8

The truly rich person is the giver

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says riches that matter are in the soul. Having and keeping does not make a person rich; giving away does, and that is what brings happiness.

9 "So it is not he who has and keeps, but he who gives away, that is rich. And it is giving away, not possession, that makes a man happy."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.6 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 13, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

Christ asks for more than a tithe

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says Christ widened the old tithe into sharing all with the poor. Cyprian adds that no command is urged more often than giving alms and storing up treasure in heaven.

10 "And for this reason the Lord, instead of the commandment, "You shall not commit adultery," also forbade even lust; and instead of "You shall not kill," He prohibited anger; and instead of the law requiring the giving of tithes, He instructed us to share all our possessions with the poor; and to love not only our neighbors, but even our enemies; and not just to be generous givers, but even to offer a gift to those who take away our belongings."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 9, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 "Among His divine commands and heavenly teachings, He commands and urges nothing more often than that we should devote ourselves to giving alms, and not depend on earthly possessions, but instead store up heavenly treasures."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 32, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not speak directly to choosing a higher-paying job in order to give more.
- They do not lay down one fixed amount that every Christian must keep or give away.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 45 early Christian passages and 143 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–45, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 46–49, in Bible order), then 139 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *45 passages from 18 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 3 (on point 1) “be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 13 (1885 English; on point 8) “if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 3*

3 *Shepherd* **Quote 8, page 4** “does these things will not be deserted by God, but will be enrolled in the books of the living. Blessed are those who have riches and understand that they are… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · source 4*

4 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (on point 1) “blessed are the meek;” and Moses was meek above all men… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 5*

5 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “the love of money is the root of all evils.” Knowing, therefore, that “as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out,” let us arm ourselves… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · source 6*

6 *First Apology* (on point 4) “lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 7–8*

7 *Diatessaron* 28 (1885 English; on point 4) “12:21 So is he that lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich in God… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Diatessaron* 8 (on point 1) “Matthew 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs” **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 9–10*

9 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** “instead of the law enjoining the giving of tithes, [He told us] to share all our possessions with the poor… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 5) the saying "You cannot serve two masters" is explained by Him: "You cannot serve God and mammon," recognizing God as God but mentioning mammon as something that exists. He does… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 11–17*

11 *Stromata* 4.6 (on point 4) in his case." For Christ belongs to the humble, who do not exalt themselves against His flock. "Lay not up for yourselves, therefore, treasures on the earth, where moth and… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Stromata* 4.6 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** “blessed are the poor, whether in spirit or in circumstance — that is, if for righteousness' sake… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Instructor* 3.6 **Quote 9, page 5** if we must distinguish, let it be granted that he is rich who has many possessions, loaded with gold like a dirty purse. But the righteous alone is graceful, because… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 19 (1885 English) “you, by receiving instead spiritual wealth, shall have now treasure in the heavens… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 16 (1885 English; on point 1) “is he who is blessed by the Lord, and called poor in spirit, a meet heir of the kingdom of heaven, not one who could not live rich… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 17 (1885 English; on point 1) “also Matthew added, Blessed are the poor… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 17 (on point 3) but the man who carries his wealth in his soul, who instead of God's Spirit carries gold or land in his heart, who is always making his possession unmeasured and… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 18–22*

18 *De Fuga in Persecutione* 12 (on point 2) “therefore, are the poor, because, He says, the kingdom… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Against Marcion* 15 the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 8:12-14 In similar words, when King Hezekiah became proud of his treasures, and boasted in them rather than in God before those who… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *On Idolatry* 11 (on point 5) we think over the rest of faults, tracing them from their generations, let us begin with covetousness, which is "the root of all evils," as 1 Timothy 6:10 says… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Against Marcion* 32 (on point 5) “them: "You cannot serve God and mammon," Luke 16:13. Then the Pharisees, who were covetous of riches, mocked Him, because they understood that by mammon He meant money. Let… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *On Patience* 11 (1885 English; on point 1) “5:3 No one, assuredly, is poor in spirit, except he be humble… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 23–24*

23 *Commentary on Matthew* 11 (on point 5) “perhaps when the Apostle says, "The love of money is a root of all evils," 1 Timothy 6:10, he says it because of Judas' love of money, which was… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Against Celsus* 56 (on point 5) set over the affairs of this world. For no man can serve two masters, and we cannot serve God and mammon, whether that name is used for one or for… [continues online] **read ›**

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Gregory Thaumaturgus, *c. 240–270 AD · source 25*

25 *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes* 5 (1885 English; on point 3) “the lust of riches is attended by sleepless nights and anxieties of mind… [continues online] **read ›**

Novatian, *c. 240–258 AD · source 26*

26 *On the Jewish Meats* 1 (1885 English; on point 5) “circle of crimes being re-trodden, that luxury may again take away whatever avarice had heaped together… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 27–33*

27 *Treatises* **Quote 4, page 3** has deceived many. They could not be ready, or at peace, when it was time to leave, because their wealth held them like a chain. These were the chains of… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Treatises* **Quote 5, page 3** “teaches us that riches are not only to be looked down on, but are also full of danger. In them is the root of misleading evils, which deceive the blindness… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 5) “the love of money is the root of all evil… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 5) “the root of all evil is the love of money, which, while some have coveted, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Treatises* (on point 8) in Solomon we read, "Store up alms in the heart of the poor, and they will plead for you against all evil." Sirach 29:12 And again: "Whoever closes his… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Treatises* **Quote 11, page 5** “alms, and not depend on earthly possessions, but instead store up heavenly treasures. He says, "Sell your goods, and give alms." Luke 12:33 And again: "Do not lay up… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 3) “riches, this wealth, she cannot possess, who had rather be rich to this world than to Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 34–35*

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 8) “He says again by David: Blessed is he that has regard to the poor and needy… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) “up to yourself heavenly treasure, which neither the moth nor thieves can destroy… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 36*

36 *Writings* (1885 English; on point 4) “will, O rich man, by insatiably looking too much to all your wealth, squander those things to which you are still seeking to cling… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 37*

37 *Disputation with Manes* 1 **Quote 1, page 2** “us look again at the fact that in the Old Testament we find the words, "I make the rich man and the poor man… [continues online] **read ›**

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 38–44*

38 *Homilies on Acts* (on point 8) his own wealth," Proverbs 13:8. And with good reason. For Christ says, "If you would be perfect, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come, follow… [continues online] **read ›**

39 *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 13 (on point 2) point unfinished. What was that point? I was saying that the poor have an advantage over the rich in the things of this life, when I spoke about health and… [continues online] **read ›**

40 *Homilies on Ephesians* 9 **Quote 2, page 2** “hear what Christ says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *Homilies on Second Thessalonians* (1885 English; on point 1) “such even Christ has pronounced blessed above all, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit… [continues online] **read ›**

42 *Homilies on Hebrews* 24 **Quote 6, page 4** “the love of money is the root of all evil… [continues online] **read ›**

43 *Homilies on Matthew* 20 (1885 English; on point 4) “sort of desire, to lay up treasure in the midst of thieves… [continues online] **read ›**

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44 *Homilies on Matthew* 15 (1885 English; on point 1) “are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 5:3… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *source 45*

45 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (on point 1) “moderation, humility, and meekness to such as are blessed by Him… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *4 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

46 **Matthew 5:3** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **read ›**

47 **Luke 12:20** But God said to him, ‘You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you. The things which you have prepared—whose will they be?’ **read ›**

48 **1 Timothy 6:7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything out. **read ›**

49 **1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *139 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 6:1

Exodus 20:12

Leviticus 20:9

Deuteronomy 18:4 · 22:10 · 26:18

Job 1:21 · 11:2

Psalms 26:2 · 44:21

Proverbs 3:12 · 3:34 · 14:8 · 16:18 · 27:2

Isaiah 10:33 · 40:3

Jeremiah 17:7 · 17:10

Matthew 4:9 · 5:4 · 5:5 · 5:6 · 5:8 · 5:9 · 5:10 · 5:11 · 5:21 · 5:27 · 5:31 · 5:32 · 5:34 · 5:46 · 6:1 · 6:19 · 6:20 · 6:31 · 6:32 · 7:7 · 7:12 · 7:13 · 7:15 · 7:21 · 8:10 · 9:13 · 10:10 · 10:39 · 10:41 · 10:42 · 12:7 · 12:34 · 15:4 · 15:5 · 16:26 · 19:3 · 19:12 · 22:21 · 23:2 · 23:13 · 23:25 · 23:27 · 26:57 · 27:29 · 27:34

Mark 2:19 · 8:36 · 12:41 · 14:5

Luke 6:24 · 6:25 · 6:26 · 6:28 · 6:30 · 6:36 · 6:37 · 10:7 · 10:19 · 12:22 · 12:30 · 12:33 · 12:42 · 13:32 · 14:33 · 16:11 · 16:12 · 16:13 · 16:14 · 16:15 · 16:16 · 16:17 · 16:18 · 19:8 · 21:14

John 1:12 · 12:5 · 12:6 · 12:25 · 15:5 · 19:17

Acts 4:34 · 8:20 · 24:26

Romans 2:29 · 8:28 · 8:32 · 9:15 · 12:3

1 Corinthians 7:10 · 7:18 · 10:24

2 Corinthians 5:1 · 8:12 · 13:3

Galatians 3:13

Ephesians 1:12 · 4:26 · 5:5 · 6:11 · 6:16

Philippians 4:3

Colossians 3:5

1 Thessalonians 5:17

1 Timothy 1:19 · 2:2 · 5:5 · 6:5 · 6:8 · 6:9 · 6:20

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2 Timothy 2:5
Titus 2:12
Hebrews 4:15 · 9:14 · 12:5
James 1:14 · 4:6
1 Peter 2:9 · 5:5
Revelation 3:19

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Did early Christians think storing up wealth was wrong, and what are its dangers?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-early-christians-think-storing-up-wealth-was-wrong-and-what-are-its. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 37.”

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THE END OF THIS STUDY