

# Mastering Money

## A Pizza Theology Seminar

### I. Introduction

- A. Billy Graham's big three temptations: Money, Sex and Power!!
- B. Does God really care about money?
  - 1] 450 + scriptural references dealing directly or indirectly with money.
  - 2] it's said to be the most referred to topic other than idolatry.

### II. Dominating OT themes:

- A. Creation is the gift of God.
  - 1] Therefore all wealth in all forms belongs to God as creator.  
(see this celebrated in Ps. 24:1)
  - 2] This reality of all wealth belonging to God establishes mankind as "stewards" of the creation in dependence on the creator's will. (Gen. 1)
    - [a] define steward:
    - [b] note the significance of the use of the steward in the teachings of Jesus and the second coming. (stewards parables)
- B. Wealth in the material world to the patriarches and Israel was a sign gift of God's grace. (Josh. 24:13 & Gen 15:13-14).
- C. Wealth in the scripture is somewhat ambiguous --- speaking both to material and non-material realities. (Prov. 10:22)
- D. The very ability to work and thus gain wealth is declared as a grace gift in creation to mankind. (Eccl. 5:19 & Dt 8:12-17)
- E. The blessing of material wealth is not a universal and individualistic gift. The OT acknowledges that not all of God's chosen children experience personal material prosperity.

This becomes very evident when we see God's repeated commands regarding Israel's care and attitude toward her poor in the Law and the Prophets.

The teachings of Moses declare that there were to be no poor in Israel --- not because all personally were made wealthy but because the people were to live in liberated caring and compassion toward others. (Dt 15:1-11) (the happy death of the prosperity doctrine)

- F. The Fall intrinsically altered our view or attitude toward wealth. This distortion of the source and nature of material wealth has caused material wealth to become a great corrupting power in human life individually and corporately.

- 1] two of the ten commandments deal directly with this corruption of our hearts with regards to things. (no stealing and no coveting).
- 2] Due to the fall the un-righteous can and do gain wealth. God allows this even though it is perplexing to the mind. (Ps.73:3-17)
- 3] Because of this corruption the OT has many penetrating criticism of wealth and of those who gain it. One of the great themes of the prophets is that of justice and its relationship to wealth.

The OT speaks of the "rights of the poor" which are established and maintained by God. [Prov. 31:4-9] To violate these rights is to bring God's judgement down individuals and the whole

nation. [Dt 24:17; Ps 146: 7; Amos 2:6 & 4:1).

The condemnation of the rich is not primarily due to how they acquired wealth, (though corruption in this area is condemned----- (see Amos 5: 10-12 & Isa. 1:23), but the deeper issue leads to the rich person's failure to depend on God and reflect the character of God to the needy.

5] God is revealed as compassionate and the rich are often shown to be both unjust and uncompassionate. God's nature is seen in the laws regulating economic life in Israel.

[a] laws concerning gleaning (Lev. 19: 9-20; 23:22)

[b] laws concerning collateral (Ex 22:26f; Dt 24:6)

[c] laws concerning charging interest (Dt. 23:19)

[d] laws concerning paying wages (Dt. 24:14f & Jer 22:13)

### III. NT Themes

- A. Carries on OT themes of Creational ownership, stewardship, justice, compassion, and God's defense of the poor.
- B. Jesus is said to have spoken more about money than heaven, hell, violence or sexual immorality. Only the overarching theme of the Kingdom of God draws more attention from our Lord. Perhaps this reflects the universal struggle and the profound implications wealth holds for every person --- rich and poor alike.
- C. The NT is dominated by negative (corrective) instruction concerning money. Almost nothing good is said about it except that it is good and blessed to give it away.
- D. Jesus teaching assumes the goodness of giving and then plunges beyond to probe the attitude of love, trust, and gratitude which we hold toward his heavenly Father.
- F. The issue of money is pressed to its strongest depths when Jesus declares money to be a false God which is a direct competitor with the true God for our heart's trusting allegiance. (Mt. 6:19-34 and Lk. 16:1-15) (see R. Foster for discussions on how money acts like a false god.)
- G. Jesus response to the corruption of wealth is to call people to a singular allegiance to his trustworthy Father through himself. (Mt. 6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God.")
- F. Jesus' and the Apostle's positive focus is to call the believer to a life that expresses the secure and selfless giving of the Father and the Son. (He was made poor so we might be made rich).
- G. J. Ellul (**Money and Power, IVP**) states that giving is the singular greatest means to destroy the idolatry of money because self-less giving is the one thing that money was not made for.

### IV. The Power of Giving

- 1] Is a **Disarming Act**--disarming the the demon of greed.
- 2] Is a **Faith Act**--revealing and strengthening our trust in God.
- 3] Is a **Compassionate Act**--promoting justice and evangelism.
- 4] Is a **Confessional Act**--bearing a testimony to God's nature.
- 5] Is a **Prophetic Act**--freeing us from the now and focusing us on the future which is in God alone.

### V. Bibliography:

- 1. Money and Power, by J. Ellul, IVP.
- 2. The Freedom of Simplicity, by R. Foster, Harper and Row.
- 3. Money, Sex and Power, by R. Foster, Harper and Row.
- 4. Wealth and Poverty, Ed. by R. Clouse, IVP.
- 5. Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger, R. Sider, IVP.
- 6. Your Finances In Changing Times, L. Burkett, Moody Press.
- 7. The Agony of Affluence, by W. Wells, Zondervan.