

MONEY ...THE DARK SIDE

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Last week we started looking at money. Money makes the world go around. Nearly everybody would like more money ... individuals ... certainly more businesses ... and definitely governments.

If you have money ... you are free to do a lot of things in life. However ... if you're dirt poor ... life is usually much more restricted.

There's a humorous saying: "Those who say money can't buy happiness ... don't know where to shop!"

Money itself is actually neutral ... neither good nor bad. There are happy people with money ... and happy people without.

There has been a tendency for some religious people to believe that money inherently is evil. That prosperity is sinful ... prosperity is of the devil. Their view is along the lines ... that true believers will be poor ... that poverty is next to Godliness.

What does the Bible have to say about wealth and prosperity? Is it automatically evil ... in all circumstances? Something we should avoid?

Last week we looked at God's attitude to prospering people. It looked like God was quite relaxed about prospering people.

We saw in Deuteronomy chapters 8 and 28 God's desire to prosper the nation of Israel ... He wanted to make them a wealthy people ... gold ... silver ... herds ... crops ... orchards ... vineyards ... a land flowing with milk and honey.

Likewise we looked at some individuals: Abraham ... Isaac ... Job ... King David (who gave \$20 billion towards the Temple funds from his own piggy bank).

So it seems that God's not against prosperity itself.

But:

There is a “dark side” to money. Although money in theory is neutral ... it can ... and often does ... cause problems. It can even shipwreck a person’s life. It should come with a warning!? And money can cause big problems ... even to those who don’t have any! Some people who aren’t prospering are filled with envy ... jealousy ... towards those who are better off ... and some turn to theft ... fraud and other criminal activities to get “their share”.

So ... let’s see what the Bible says about the dark side.

1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,**

This verse is usually misquoted! “Money is the root of all evil”. It’s not money ... it’s the love of money.

Even people who have no money can love it! Cheat ... steal ... kill ... to get it!

So ... properly quoted: “The love of money is A ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL”.

Others like Abraham ... Isaac ... King David ... clearly didn’t love it ... it never came between God and them.

Let’s review the context.

1 Timothy 6:6-11 (NKJV)

6 **Now godliness with contentment is great gain.**

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

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.**

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.

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:9 (AMP BIBLE)

9 **But those who crave to be rich ... (that's their priority ... where their heart is)**

Verse 10 ... the love of money ... plus greediness.

And ... of course ... you can love money ... and be greedy for it ... without actually having any.

The danger is always discontentment ... craving more ... “when I get this house/car/bank account ... bigger ... better ... more ... I'll be happy”.

Loving money ... chasing it ... forfeiting health and family relationships ... perhaps engaging in shady dealings to get more ... it's all too common. Even among believers.

Deuteronomy 8:6-10 (NKJV)

6 **“Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.**

7 **For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs,** that flow out of valleys and hills;

8 **a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;**

9 **a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing;** a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

10 **When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.**

God 's plan ... He promises abundance. It's in His heart.

But. There's a dark side.

Deuteronomy 8:11-18 (NKJV)

11 **“Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,**

12 **lest**—**when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses** and dwell in them;

13 and **when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;**

14 **when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;** *(Here’s the danger. In your heart ... you think this ... I did this)*

15 who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;

16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—

17 **then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’**

18 **“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.**

Don’t forget God! Don’t forget the source! Don’t set your heart on the wealth! Never take your eyes off the Giver ... off the Provider.

God wants our heart ... to be loyal and faithful to Him.

Notice: It’s the power to get wealth ... it usually requires our efforts ... “six days shalt thou work”. God gives us the power and the opportunity.

Psalms 62:1-2 (NKJV)

1 **Truly my soul silently waits for God;**
From Him comes my salvation.

2 **He only is my rock and my salvation;**
He is my defense;
I shall not be greatly moved.

Psalms 62:5-8 (NKJV)

5 **My soul, wait silently for God alone,**

For my expectation is from Him.

6 **He only is my rock and my salvation;**

He is my defense;

I shall not be moved.

7 **In God is my salvation and my glory;**

The rock of my strength,

And my refuge, is in God.

8 **Trust in Him** at all times, you people;

Pour out your heart before Him;

God is a refuge for us.

Selah

So again. Look to God.

Psalms 62:9-10 (NKJV)

9 Surely men of low degree are a vapour,

Men of high degree are a lie;

If they are weighed on the scales,

They are altogether lighter than vapour.

10 Do not trust in oppression,

Nor vainly hope in robbery;

If riches increase,

Do not set your heart on them. *(As they did for Israel. Don't set your heart on them)*

That is a warning for us. A wise person never takes his eye off God. His heart is established. Don't focus on the gift ... but on the giver.

Proverbs 1:16-19 (NKJV)

16 For their feet run to evil,

And they make haste to shed blood.

17 Surely, in vain the net is spread

In the sight of any bird;

18 But they lie in wait for their own blood,

They lurk secretly for their own lives.

19 **So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain;**

It takes away the life of its owners.

Proverbs 1:19 (HCSB)

19 **Such are the paths of all who make profit dishonestly;**

Proverbs 1:19 (NLT)

19 **Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money;
it robs them of life.**

It doesn't say that gain ... of itself ... is wrong. But where it's linked to greed ... selfishness ... dishonesty ... it's not Godly.

Proverbs 11:28 (NKJV)

28 **He who trusts in his riches will fall,
But the righteous will flourish like foliage.**

It's not the "fault" of the riches ... of the prosperity itself. Money per se is neutral. But we need to ensure our eyes remain on the giver. Not put all our confidence in our bank account ... our investments ... our stocks and shares ... our gold. Our Provider is dependable.

Psalms 52:1 (NKJV)

1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?

The goodness of God endures continually.

Psalms 52:4-8 (NKJV)

4 **You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.**

5 God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living.

6 The righteous also shall see and fear,
And shall laugh at him, saying,

7 **"Here is the man who did not make God his strength,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness."**

8 **But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.**

It's the wicked man who trusts in abundance of his riches. He is encouraged to continue in his wickedness. We must trust in God. The Bank of Heaven never goes bust!

Proverbs 28:6 (NKJV)

**6 Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.**

Proverbs 28:6 (GOD'S WORD TRANSLATION)

**6 Better to be a poor person who has integrity than to be rich and
double dealing.**

It doesn't say poor is better ... more spiritual. There are plenty of poor people who are dishonest and perverse.

But the ideal would be to prosper ... and remain honest and upright. Like Abraham ... or Job ... or King David.

But if you couldn't cope with wealth ... and it is likely to corrupt you ... yes it would be better to remain poor. But not God's ideal. God is generous and prefers to bless. Consider the World Tomorrow ... what will it be like?

For many people ... there can be dangers in either extreme ... being very poor or very wealthy.

Proverbs 30:7-9 (NKJV)

7 Two things I request of You

(Deprive me not before I die):

8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me;

Give me neither poverty nor riches—

Feed me with the food allotted to me;

9 Lest I be full and deny You,

And say, "Who is the Lord?"

Or lest I be poor and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

Abraham ... Isaac ... Joseph ... Job and King David ... had plenty of riches ... so Proverbs 30 is not the only way. But for some people ... middle of the road would be far safer. But notice ... NOT POVERTY! That's not the answer.

Luke 12:13-21 (NKJV)

13 **Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”**

14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

15 **And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Addressed to you and me ... to everyone)**

16 **Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.**

17 **And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’**

18 **So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.**

19 **And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’**

20 **But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’**

21 **“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

This man was covetous. His life revolved around his possessions. He thought only of himself. No generosity towards others. He put his confidence in his riches.

He had the wrong attitude of mind. No problem with riches ... per se ... Abraham ... Job ... etc. But ... this man had no time for God ... or for other people.

Setting out to get riches ... purely for our own consumption ... is a wrong priority. BE ALERT!

Luke 8:9-15 (NKJV)

9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?”

10 And He said, **“To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see,**

And hearing they may not understand.’

11 “Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.**

12 ***Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*** (No impact ... the Word achieves nothing)

13 But ***the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.***

14 Now ***the ones that fell among thorns*** are those who, when they have heard, ***go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*** (A bad place to be)

15 But ***the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.***

What hampered the person in verse 14 ... their lives are choked with ... cares ... riches ... and pleasures of this life. They got their focus on the wrong things ... brought in anxieties ... they didn't remain focused on the Giver. Wrong priorities ... so their growth stalled.

Mark 10:17-27 (NKJV)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, **one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"**

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honour your father and your mother.' "

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 **Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."** (Jesus gave him the opportunity to join His Crusade team)

22 **But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.** (or rather ... they had him)

23 **Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”**

24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, **how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!** (*You can only serve one master*)

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Here is the problem. If you trust in riches ... you can't trust in God. Where is your trust? In what can you trust?

Luke 16:13-15 (NKJV)

13 “**No servant can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**”

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. (*The love of money is the root of all evil*)

15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but **God knows your hearts**. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

The Pharisees loved money (as many religious leaders today do!).

The Pharisees couldn't be lovers of God ... despite their claims and empty words. You can't have two masters ... and they loved money.

God needs to come first. He is the Giver. To serve money ... put wealth on a pedestal ... is akin to idolatry.

Ephesians 5:5 (NKJV)

5 For this you know, that **no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

If you are a covetous person ... you are an idolater and won't be in the Kingdom of God.

Don't forget ... even a poor person can be covetous ... and a rich person can be faithful and generous.

Money itself is neutral ... but if we covet it ... we're guilty of idolatry.

1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

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.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NKJV)

17 **Command those who are rich in this present age** not to be haughty, **nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.**

18 **Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,**

19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Don't trust in uncertain riches ... but be generous ... be givers. It's a question of where your heart is.

James 5:1 (NKJV)

1 **Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!**

Misery just because they're rich?

James 5:2-6 (NKJV)

2 **Your riches are corrupted,** and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 **Your gold and silver are corroded,** and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

4 **Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud,** cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. *(These evil wealthy people have exploited their employees)*

5 **You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury**; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

6 **You have condemned, you have murdered the just**; he does not resist you.

They are dishonest! They abused their wealth. Corrupt. Influenced by the dark side!

James 5:5 (AMP)

5 **[Here] on earth you have abandoned yourselves to soft (prodigal) living and to [the pleasures of] self-indulgence and self-gratification.**

These people were wealthy ... had money ... had the opportunity to be generous towards others ... but thought only of themselves ... even defrauding others.

God's not against prosperity. But He is against greed ... selfishness ... and abuse ... and people who choose to serve mammon rather than Him.

There's a reference to Job nearby ... so let's read that.

James 5:7-11 (NKJV)

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

11 **Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.**

God doubled Job's wealth!

Wealth isn't a problem to God if the heart is right ... but we must watch out for the dark side.

Mark 8:34-37 (NKJV)

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

36 For **what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?**

37 Or **what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

What is the point of acquiring all the wealth in the world ... if you lose your soul?

One day God will bless us with a share of the entire universe ... but to lose our souls ... our eternal destiny ... in exchange for material possessions ... that is not a good exchange!

So. We saw last week ... God's nature ... His disposition is to show favour ... nationally and individually. He has no problem with money or wealth. But often ... as people ... we do. There is a dark side ... which can influence people the wrong way whether they have money or not! So ... be alert.

Next week we will have a look at how churches and religion can abuse people financially ... something else to be alert to!