

Financial Principles of the Bible

BRAD ETTORE
AGATHOS CHURCH
JULY 5TH AND 19TH, 2015

Sermon Summary

Introduction

We may see the promises in the Word about financial matters, but we may not see those promises coming to pass in our lives. We think, "I am doing what I am supposed to do. I'm giving where I am supposed to give. I'm believing God for the return on that giving, but it's not really happening - why is that?" The answer to that question is going to be found in this teaching on the foundational financial principles of the Bible.

This foundation is about a mindset and a heart stance that God requires every one of His children to have in order to be able to operate in His Kingdom's financial principles. If God were to give you wealth beyond your spiritual maturity to handle it, that very wealth would become dangerous to you - and He's not going to be party to that. 3 John 2 says "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." God will establish the wealth of your soul and then move you into financial wealth. Yes, you can get wealthy on your own (without the spiritual maturity) but that wealth will do to you what it does to everyone else who has wealth on the outside but not on the inside - it wrecks them.

Let's not talk about money . . .

While there are abuses as it relates to preaching about money, the reality is the Bible talks about money more than **any** other subject. Since the Bible talks about money - and talks about it a lot - we should also talk about it and understand what God has to say about it! People tend to get funny when you talk about money in the church - but that is not wise! People abuse driving cars - does that mean you are going to stop driving yours? Because there is some abuse out there about teaching the financial principles of the Bible, should we disregard all the Bible actually has to say about finances? That makes about as much sense as screen doors on a submarine!

Many believe that poverty is akin to spirituality and wealth is akin to worldliness. Similarly, we often hear the term "filthy rich." But why would we automatically accuse a rich person of being "filthy?" Why don't we say "wonderfully rich?" Can money be used in a filthy way? Sure. But, when money is used the right way, it is a sweet thing to the Lord! Money can be used in such a way that it is a sweet aroma in the nostrils of God! There is another way you can use money that is a stench in his nostrils. There is nothing inherently wrong with money! Quite the contrary!

Money is Good

In Genesis chapter 2, God deliberately points out gold to Adam as He is giving Adam a tour of the land: "The name of the first *is* Pishon; it *is* the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. And the gold of that land *is* good." Now who made the gold? Who decided to point it out to Adam? Who called it "good"? God did!

Therefore, you can feel good about calling gold (i.e., money) good because God made the gold, pointed out the gold, and called the gold "good"! Money is not evil, dirty, or something to stay away from. God's word is that gold is good.

When God pointed out the gold to Adam He knew money would be very important to man. The reality is you cannot live, eat, or have shelter and clothes without money (yours or someone else's). You cannot feed the poor, clothe the naked, or "go into all the world" without money. Your faith will never rise above your knowledge of God's will in any area of your life. That is why it is so important to have a solid foundation about God's will as it relates to finances. We need to understand where money came from! God made money (Gen. 2:12) and says it is His (Hag. 2:8) Money is not neutral – it is spiritual and good!

Blessed in Every Area of Life

It is God's *desire* that His children would be *blessed in every area of life*. There are no exceptions to that statement. Any parent would be quite confused by the question: "what areas of life would you like your child to NOT be blessed in?" "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11) God does not have a skewed personality that only wants us blessed in some areas of life!

God so loved the World that He gave His only Son! (Jn. 3:16) Romans 8:32 picks up on that reality . . . "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" "All things" of course includes the area of finances! Let this simple but profound truth change your thinking.

We don't want to get religious about money – we want to get spiritual about it! In other words, we want to think like God thinks about it! For instance, looking at God's interactions with Abram in Genesis 12 and 13, we see that God includes finances as one of the components of His definition of blessing.

When God told Abram to leave his family and land, He effectively told him to leave all his protection and provision. God told Abram to come out to a place that "I will show you." (Gen 12:1-3) God told him "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God promised this major blessing to Abram.

So what did the blessing end up looking like in practical terms? See Genesis 13:1-2: "Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." Abram was rich and it was God's doing. Part of God's blessing in Abram's life was in terms of wealth and possessions. God is not opposed to riches – He considers them to be a blessing!

Is Money the Most Important Thing?

Is money the most important thing in life? Most people start getting off track when they make money the priority of life. If you believe God wants you to be blessed financially AND you then put that as a priority in your heart, you will get off track with God. Pastor Brad has been full of joy and miserable in all 3 stages of money (broke, OK, and wealthy). That has taught him a simple but profound truth:

Money isn't the principle thing.

Having been both "broke and full of joy" and "wealthy and full of joy," he prefers the "wealthy and full of joy." But he wasn't full of joy because of the wealth! The wealth was the proverbial "icing on the cake" - but it's not the cake! What are some of the things that are better than money?

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Marriage
- Children
- Health
- Reputation (or honor)

Think about health, for instance. Would you rather have \$1 billion and be wretchedly sick or poor with great health? Yes, both hypothetical scenarios are bad, but most would prefer to have their health. In Pastor Brad's travels, many very poor people were particularly happy! Wealth simply does not, in and of itself, bring happiness! That's not where it comes from!

Desiring God vs. Desiring Riches

1 Tim. 6:10 says "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil . . ." Notice that it says the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil. We know it's not the root of all evil because the Bible teaches very clearly that sin is the root of all evil. But, sin in the heart of man, will cause the love of money. The "love of money" is a heart stance characterized by an overwhelming desire to be rich.

Paul tells Timothy that those who "desire to be rich," whose focus is money, fall "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." The love of money (the heart posture that has money on the throne) will not produce gain at all! But, "godliness with contentment is great gain." Go after godliness and the contentment that is found not in money but in your relationship with the Lord. That's great gain.

The reality is most things that have real power come with warnings. The warnings that come with a car don't mean "therefore don't drive a car." The scriptures simply give us warning against the power of money - it wants to take over your heart so God gives us warnings about the dangers of it.

But God is not saying "therefore I don't want you to have money." Don't get a wrong understanding simply because there are warnings with it. All of 1 Tim. 6 is a warning label.

Having Riches vs. Trusting in Riches

Mark 10 shares the story about a rich, young ruler coming to ask Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man told Jesus that he had kept all of those since his youth. Jesus said, "OK, you lack one thing . . . sell all that you have and come and follow me." Jesus effectively brought up the first commandment "you shall have no other Gods before me" by asking the young man to sell his god - money - and follow Him instead. Mark tells us this young man unfortunately went away sad "for he had great possessions."

Jesus turned this into a teaching moment with His disciples, telling them "how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" A trust in riches can cover up (in some measure) how lost and destitute a wealthy person actually is. Jesus was addressing a heart stance with the young man in order to set him free of a bondage to money. God is not opposed to us having things, but He is opposed to things having us. He is for riches when our heart is right!

Conclusion

With a right perspective about money, the financial principles of the Kingdom of God will actually work because you'll have your heart right - you'll be lined up with the Kingdom of God. Money, in God's eyes, is a beautiful thing when used His way. God wants the world to see His benevolence, to see His heart, through us! How can that be accomplished if we are broke? God wants us to have money - but He wants us to have it with a couple things lined-up correctly:

- Money is not our source. He is!
- Don't get haughty or proud when we have riches. When you have money, just say "this is from the Lord - the Lord has blessed me!"

- Be like God with money - give, give, give! Luke 6:38 says "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." You can't out-give God!

When you get blessed the way God wants you to get blessed, there's no sorrow with it. (Prov. 10:22) According to the world's ways, you will compromise many things to get wealth. When you gain wealth God's way, you don't compromise. In His plan to bless us, not only do we get the wealth, but we also get the joy along with it!

We only want wealth God's way!

Scriptures

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." (3 John 2)

"The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good." (Gen. 2:11-12a)

"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the Lord of hosts." (Hag. 2:8)

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11)

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (Jn 3:16)

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32)

"Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Gen. 12:1-3)

"Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." (Gen. 13:1-2)

"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 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. 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 Tim. 6:6-10)

“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.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ 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!’” (Mark 10:21-24)

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

“The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” (Prov. 10:22)

Points to Ponder . . .

- 1) What are some of God’s foundational principles about money? What scriptures show us that? How do those scriptures confirm or challenge your thinking?
- 2) Proverbs 4 says “wisdom is the principle thing.” In what ways does wisdom produce wealth? How does beginning to seek wealth instead of wisdom cause you to lose both?
- 3) Luke 6:38 says "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Can you give an example of that in your life or from scripture?
- 4) Compare and contrast the rich young ruler in Mark 10 with Solomon (1 Kings 3). What can be gleaned from that contrast that might make a difference in your life?