

Robbing the Usurper

by Watchman Nee

To take money out of the world system, we must first take our lives out of the world and give ourselves to God.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:9

Topics: "Spiritual Dedication", "Financial Stewardship"

Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes that Christ's mission was to save sinners, and in doing so, we can rob Satan of his dominion, particularly through the act of soul-winning. He highlights the inherent unrighteousness of money and its tendency to lead us away from God, urging believers to convert their finances from the world to God's kingdom. Nee illustrates that true devotion to God requires a personal sacrifice, where one's life must accompany their financial contributions. He stresses that money, while a necessary part of life, must be handled with the understanding that it can either serve God or become a tool of the enemy. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a complete dedication to God, ensuring that all aspects of our lives, including finances, are aligned with His will.

Transcript

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Since in the eternal purpose of God it is man (and not some other being) who is to have dominion, it is natural and right that our compassion should be drawn out to those sinners. Notwithstanding anything said hitherto, we might well feel that in this brief day of grace the winning of souls to the Savior of the world is perhaps the supreme means available to us of robbing Satan of his spoils. Certainly were "man" himself our theme, we should give a big place at this point to the subject of soul-winning.

But we have dealt with evangelism already elsewhere. Instead, therefore, I propose in closing these studies of "the world" to take another and more materialistic area of Satan's dominion by way of practical illustrations of the art of "despoiling the strong man." I refer to the field of finance.

Money is opposed to God. The Word of God speaks of it as the mammon of unrighteousness (Luke 16:9). Since Jesus says, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness," he clearly cannot mean to describe it as the mammon that you have obtained through unrighteous dealings. He is therefore saying that the mammon itself is unrighteous. What is being brought before us here is not the unrighteous means by which money is procured, nor the unrighteous use to which money is put, but the unrighteous character of money. Money in its essential character is evil. We talk of "clean money" and "dirty money," but in God's sight there is only dirty money. The man who knows God knows the character

of money. He knows that money in itself is evil.

If you would test the character of anything, you only need to enquire whether that thing leads you to God or away from God. Money invariably leads away from God. Jesus lays down clearly in verse 13 the principle that it is impossible to serve God and mammon, though I think that even without his statement, most of us would be convinced that this is so. For experience tells us that God and mammon are never on the same side; mammon is always set over against God.

Of course it would be possible to interpret Jesus' words more widely, and to see "mammon" as representing everything in general that opposes itself to God. But the apostle Paul helps us to pinpoint money as the means the world uses most successfully to draw us away from God. "They that desire to be rich," he says, "fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the roots of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9, 10). In other words, if anything can lead us astray from God, money will.

The essence of the world is money. Whenever you touch money you touch the world. The question arises, How can we take a thing which we know assuredly to be of the world, and yet not become involved with the world system? How can we handle and do business with money, that most worldly of worldly things, and not, in doing so, become implicated with Satan? Still more to the point, since nothing can be done today without paying for it, how is it possible for us to take money, that thing which is a supreme factor in building up the kingdom of antichrist, and use it to build up the kingdom of Christ?

The widow who dropped her mite into the temple treasury did something so acceptable to the Lord that she received from him special commendation. What in fact she did was just this: she took something out of the kingdom of Satan and contributed it to the kingdom of God. And Jesus approved. So how, let us ask ourselves, is such a transfer made? How is it possible to take money, which in its character is essentially unrighteous, and with it build up the kingdom of God? How can you make sure that all connection between the world and the money in your pocket has been severed? Do you dare to say that none of the money in your possession figures in Satan's books?

On every Roman denarius there was an image of Caesar. In Jesus' words, all such coins "are Caesar's." How could the connection between Caesar and that coin be severed? Money is a thing of the world. It is an essential part of the world system. How then can it be taken out of the world that claims it and devoted to God for his use?

In Old Testament times a rigid principle was laid down. "No devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, whether of man or beast, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:28). In other words, there is no true devotion without destruction. If in those days a sheep was devoted to God, it was not placed before him to remain there a living sheep and to bring forth lambs; it was placed before him to be sacrificed. "It shall certainly be put to death" (verse 29). Its destruction was the sign of its acceptance.

All money that is truly devoted to God must come under the principle of destruction; that is to say, it must cease to exist as far as the world is concerned, and it must cease to exist also as far as I am concerned. When our Lord commended the widow for putting her two coins into the treasury, he observed that she had put in her life, that is, her life. "She of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:44). Many people just put money into the treasury of the Lord; she put her life in with her money. In

other words, when that money went out of her possession, her life went out with it. In giving her two coins she gave her all.

If your money is to come out of the world, then your life will have to come out of the world. You cannot keep your self back and contribute anything significant to God. You cannot send your money out of the world at all: you can only bring it out of the world!

Thus it is no easy matter to transfer money from the realm of Satan to the realm of God; it involves travail. To convert souls from Satan to God is in fact easier than to convert money from Satan to God. By the grace of God men and women may be won to him whether or not we ourselves are devoted in any utter sense; but this is not so with money. It takes great spiritual power to convert our shekels, which in their character are evil, into shekels of the sanctuary. Money needs converting as truly as men need converting; and the money can, I believe, be made anew (if in a rather different sense) as truly as souls can be made anew. But your bringing of an offering of money to the treasury will not in itself change the character of the money you offer. Unless your life goes out with your money it cannot be released from the kingdom of Satan and transferred to the kingdom of God. The spiritual value of your work for God will largely depend on whether or not the money you handle has been delivered from the world system. I ask you, Has it? Can you claim that there is no money in your hand that belongs to the world? Are you able to say now that your money is no longer a part of the cosmos, for it has all been converted? Are you willing to tell God: "I will convert all the money I earn by labor, and all the money I receive by gifts, that it all may be thine?"

To Paul the principle was very plain: We want you, not yours. Of the Macedonian saints, who out of their poverty contributed so liberally, he said that "first they gave their own selves to the Lord," then they gave their money (2 Cor. 8:5). Paul had his training in the Old Testament, where the consecration of material gifts was always connected with the consecration of those who brought the gifts. His reasoning may have had its roots there.

For it may sound startling, but it is true, that God has a limited supply of money, whereas Satan's supply is unlimited. You wonder perhaps how this statement can be reconciled with that other one, that all the silver and the gold are his. Yet our Lord Jesus himself says that there is that which belongs to God and that which belongs to Caesar. Ultimately no doubt all material things belong to God as Creator, but the amount of

If I had lived in Old Testament times I could have calculated immediately the amount of money in the sanctuary. I should have inquired the total number of the children of Israel and reckoned half a shekel of silver for the redemption of each of them (Exod. 30:11-16). To that I should have added five shekels per head for the redemption of each of the firstborn of Israel in excess of the Levites (Num. 3:39-51). And then to these two amounts I should have added the valuation, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, put upon each individual who of his free will devoted himself to the Lord (Lev. 27:1-8). Yes, it is the number of God's people that determine the amount of God's money. The margin of wealth in God's treasury is based on the number of people devoted to him.

Here, then, is a vital question for each one of us to answer: Does the money I am touching today represent shekels of the sanctuary or the mammon of unrighteousness? Whenever I receive a dollar, or whenever I earn a dollar, let me make sure that that dollar is instantly converted from world currency into the currency of the sanctuary. Money can be our destruction, but money can also be our protection. Do not despise money; its value is too real for that. It can be of great account to the Lord. If you yourself come heart and

soul out of the world, then you can, if God so wills it, bring many precious things out of the world with you. When the Israelites came out of Egypt they brought away much treasure with them. They spoiled the Egyptians, and the spoil they carried away with them went to construct the Tabernacle. Some too, we recall, went to construct a golden calf and was lost to God. But when God's people left Egypt the Tabernacle, at least in its materials, left Egypt with them. Egyptian gold, silver, copper, linen-all was converted and contributed to the sanctuary of God.

If you can find that reality in Old Testament times, how much higher still must be the standard set in the New! The New Testament key to all finance is that we hold nothing to ourselves. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," those were our Lord's words (Luke 6:38) and not, "Save and ye shall grow rich"! That is to say, the principle of divine increase is giving, not storage. God requires of . every one of us proportionate and not just random giving. He desires, that is to say, giving that is not subject merely to the whim of the moment but that is the fruit of a definite covenant reached with him about the matter-and stuck to.

This is because the real secret of spoiling Satan is, as we saw, personal dedication. For us to be redeemed from the world and not as a consequence offer ourselves to God is an utterly impossible thing. "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). It matters not whether we follow a profession or trade that brings us an income from the world, or occupy ourselves solely in preaching the Word and depend for our sustenance upon the gifts of God's people, there is only one road before us, not two.

We are all equally dedicated to God and we are all his witnesses. It is simply not true that preaching the Gospel in itself is clean and business unclean, so that those who engage in the latter must become so tainted as to be of less account to God. What matters is simply that God, and not our business, must be the center of our lives.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." You have an anointing from the Holy One: live by it! Give yourself to God; live for him wholly and utterly; see to it that, where you personally are concerned, the things of this world are scored off Satan's books and transferred to God's account. For "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

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