

(Basics) 47. Give Back What Belongs to Others

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of returning what belongs to others and prioritizing righteousness in financial matters to avoid the destructive love of money.

Duration: 13:22

Scripture: Matthew 22:21, Luke 19:9, 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Topics: "Wealth And Greed", "Stewardship Of Money"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the dangers of the love of money and material possessions. He references the story of Zacchaeus, who repented and decided to return four times the amount of money he had wrongfully taken from people. The preacher emphasizes that money belongs to people and if one cannot find the rightful owners, it should be given to the church or the poor. He warns that those who have a desire to get rich will fall into temptation and harmful desires, leading to ruin and destruction. The preacher compares the lure of money to the way drugs are sold, starting with a small taste and then hooking people into wanting more. He concludes by highlighting the importance of prioritizing building the church and not wasting one's life in the pursuit of money. The sermon is based on verses from 1 Timothy 6:9-10, which warn about the love of money being the root of all sorts of evil.

Transcript

And we want to look a little more into the subject we've been looking at in our last two programs. And that is how the love of money and material things can destroy us. Please listen carefully because this affects your life.

I want to turn to a verse, two verses actually, in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 9 and 10. It says, those who want to get rich. This doesn't apply to everybody in the world.

It applies to those who want to get rich. Do you fall into that category? A lot of people do. Even a lot of believers.

So, if that refers to you, those who want to get rich, then please listen, because the Bible warns you in advance of what's going to happen. Those who want to get rich, 1 Timothy 6, 9, will fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction because the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil and some by longing for it. Now again, this is not applying to everybody, but those who long for more and more money.

Are you in that category? Those who long for more and more money? Here is what almighty God says will happen. Some have wandered away from the faith by longing for more and more money and have pierced themselves with many sorrows. So, what are the results of wanting to get rich and longing for more and more money beyond what we need? Falling into temptation, falling into the trap of the devil, falling into many foolish desires, many harmful desires, plunging into ruin, plunging into destruction, wandering away from the faith and being pierced with many sorrows.

Do you want such a life? All you got to do is pursue after money beyond your needs. Now the Lord is not against our earning our living. The Lord is not against our seeking to increase our income, getting a better job, earning a higher income.

This is not what it's talking about. This is talking about a passion. Love is a passion where your heart is possessed.

You know what it means when you say a boy and a girl are in love with each other. They are everything to each other. And when a person loves money like that and wants more and more and more and more, this is exactly what's going to happen to him.

And Satan doesn't tell us right in the beginning what all is going to happen if you go along this way. He first lures us by giving us a little taste of the enjoyment of wealth. You know, just like people who sell drugs.

You know how they get people hooked on drugs? By giving a little bit of a drug, maybe in a sweet, sometimes freely, to a little child in a school. And once the child gets a taste of it, once that young boy or girl gets a taste of it, they want more. And then we say they are hooked, like the fish caught in the bait.

And they want more and more and more and more. And then the people who sell drugs make their money through that. So first they give them a little taste.

And that's exactly how Satan does it. He increases our appetite for money and material things by giving us a little bit, until you have plunged your family and yourself into ruin and destruction. People get into debt to buy this and buy that.

And the result is Christians whose lives were meant to build the church, are now, their lives are being wasted in the pursuit of money. That's happening. Many believers have sold their heavenly birthright for a bowl of porridge.

Just like Esau. Just think what regret they will have in eternity. And any sensible believer, therefore, will never never pursue after accumulating wealth beyond his needs.

Just like he will not jump off the 10th floor of a building. Supposing you climb up a building to the 10th floor. If you are a sensible person, you don't jump down from the 10th floor.

It is more foolish to pursue after money. Why is it people do it then? They don't think any harm will come to them. Just like that senseless person who jumps off the 10th floor and thinks no harm will come to him.

Oh yeah, he may say, other people got hurt, but I'm not going to get hurt. And that's how a lot of believers run after money, till they have destroyed themselves. The pursuit of money and jumping off the 10th floor from a building, both of these actions can destroy you.

So if you take the warnings of scripture, you will protect yourself. But if you jump off the 10th floor of a building and you say, God will protect me, that's foolish. God is not going to protect a person who jumps from the pinnacle of the temple.

Now, it's possible for a person to say, Lord, I want to know how to be free from this, sincerely. And I believe there are many believers like that around the world who are really seeking to be free. And I want to tell you two things, which you can listen to.

And both are mentioned in Matthew 22, verse 21. You remember when somebody took a coin. Somebody asked Jesus, should we pay taxes? And Jesus said, show me a coin.

And Jesus said, whose picture is on that coin? They said, Caesar's. And then he made the statement in Matthew 22, verse 21. He says, you give Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

And give God the things that are God's. There are two statements here that can deliver you from the pursuit of money. And Jesus was there telling us our responsibility in relation to material things.

First of all, let's start with the first one. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Notice, Jesus did not say first give to God what is God's and then give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

No, let's get the order correct. He did not put God first here. He said, first of all, give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

Secondly, give God what is God's. He was first telling us to be righteous in money matters. And then he was telling us to be faithful in money matters.

These are two different things. One is higher than the other. First of all, we've got to be righteous in money matters.

And then we've got to be faithful in money matters. Okay, what does it mean to be righteous in money matters? This is the kindergarten lesson in money. This means we must give to Caesar what belongs to him.

Caesar represents another human being or the government, either. For example, if you have borrowed money from somebody, call that person Caesar. Don't give God that money.

God doesn't want it. You give back your debt to Caesar. What belongs to Caesar must go back to Caesar first.

That's why Jesus put God second. You see there? God doesn't want Caesar's money. So you better give back to Caesar what belongs to him and then decide what you want to give to God.

So those of you who are in debt, who owe money to others, and I'm sorry to say there are many believers who've got this very bad habit, I want to encourage you to start giving back to Caesar what belongs to him. Unless that other person has released you from your debt and say, okay, that's all right, you need not pay it back, you have an obligation to pay it back, even if you borrowed it from him 25 years ago. It may not have been borrowed, it may have been stolen.

Supposing you have stolen something that belongs to somebody else, maybe his property. Maybe you got somebody's book lying with you for many years at home, you've never returned it. A book you borrowed.

Maybe a knife or a pickaxe or a shovel or something you borrowed, but you've never returned. Return it. Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's.

If it is money that you took wrongfully, maybe you worked in an office and you stole things from that office. Send a check to that office. Return that money.

Maybe you worked in a hospital and stole drugs from that hospital for your family use or stole equipment. Return that money. Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's.

Maybe you traveled in the railways without buying a ticket. Go and buy a ticket for that distance and return that money. If you traveled in a bus, give that money back to that particular bus service.

We have to begin by giving to Caesar what is Caesar's. If you haven't set these things right with Caesar, then don't give to God. God won't accept it.

That is why Jesus said to put Caesar first. The same thing applies to the government. Supposing in the past you cheated the income tax by not telling them how much you earned.

Well, calculate that and give the money back. Maybe you came back from some gulf country or abroad and brought in a lot of things and hid it from the customs so that you never paid any duty. Or what is worse, perhaps you bribed the customs officer and got the thing through.

What should you do now? Well, calculate the duty and pay it back to the government. You say, but I gave such a lot of money to the customs officer. Forget it.

Set it right with the government. To give it to the customs officer as a bribe is not the same as giving it to the government. Definitely not.

That went into his pocket. So this is where we must begin. Return all money that was taken wrongfully.

Zacchaeus said to the Lord, I will return four times, Luke 19 verse 9, of what I have taken from people I have taken wrongfully from. He calculated the interest and said, I took it many years ago. They could have put it in a bank that got more interest.

So I better give back four times. And then he thought of all the people whose addresses he didn't know how to give back their money. He said, I'll give it to the poor.

So, when you have money with you, it belongs to people and you don't know where they are living today. Then you must give it to the church or to the poor. One of the two.

Even if your debt is very large, don't get discouraged. Start by paying a small amount every month. Maybe ten rupees a month, even that.

But start paying it back. If there is a willing heart, God will bless you from the very first day that you start paying back your debt, even if it takes you fifteen years to pay your whole debt. He doesn't wait till the whole debt is cleared.

He sees a willing heart and he sees that you are willing to set it right. And to give to Caesar everything that belongs to Caesar. There is no use hanging a plaque in your house saying, God bless our home.

If you got things in your home, money in your home that has been obtained unrighteously. O, nothing to anyone is what the Bible says in Romans 13. Let's begin today.

Make a decision right now before the end of this program. To give back to everyone what belongs to them.

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