

Finances

by Zac Poonen

We must understand that the Earth and everything in it belongs to God, and we are only stewards of His resources, not owners.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:7

Topics: "Stewardship", "Financial Freedom"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the importance of understanding God's principles in the area of finance, emphasizing that everything belongs to the Lord and we are merely stewards of His resources. He highlights the need to seek God first in finances, to not be possessive of money or material things, and to serve God wholeheartedly without being entangled by the love of money. Poonen urges believers to follow New Testament principles of finances, trust in God's provision, and be free from the influence of money and the world.

Transcript

Now this session, in continuation of submission to God's authority, we want to consider submission to God's principles in the area of finance, and money, and mammon in general. I want to show you a few verses concerning some fundamental principles in this area. First, let me go down to practical matters.

First of all, 1st Corinthians Chapter 10, and verse 26, "The Earth is the Lord's, and everything that is in it." That's a verse that we really need to understand. The Earth does not belong to the devil. The Bible does not use the words Earth and World in the same way. When it speaks of the world, it speaks of the world system, he is the ruler of the world, the devil, but he is never called the ruler of the Earth. The Earth belongs to the Lord. "The world" speaks of a system, but the Earth is material things and everything that is in the Earth, the trees and the plants and the vegetables, [ect.]. "The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it belongs to the Lord," so in that sense, he says, "You can eat anything sold in the meat market, because everything that is in the Earth, the animals and everything, belong to the Lord, and just because someone kept the animal killed it before a block of wood called an idol doesn't mean it's ceased to belong to the Lord" (verse 25). That's why we give thanks when we eat our food, because the food belongs to the Lord, it's part of the Earth, and He's giving it to me. It's just like if you were invited to someone's house for a meal, you give thanks to that person for what meal he gives you. That's exactly how we give thanks to the Lord.

1st Corinthians 10:26, "The Earth is the Lord's, and everything that is in it". That's why we read in 1st Timothy Chapter 6 verse 7, "We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of it, either". Why is it that if a man spends a lifetime earning a lot of money, he is not allowed to take it when he goes from this world? You see, if the money belonged to that person we would have to say that God was stealing it from him in not allowing him to take it with him when he leaves the world. We need to understand here, a man spends lifetime earning one life of rupees, and when he dies, he can't take a pint of it out of the Earth. Why? It's because when he came to the world, he brought nothing in. It's like if I take a child of mine to another house, and while I'm in their house, they give certain toys for the child to play with, and then the child is so taken up with these fancy toys that when he leaves the house he likes to put some of these in his pocket and go, and a good father and mother, a wise father and mother will likely check the pockets of the children before you leave their house because the child doesn't have an understanding of that, and they have to tell the child, "When you came to this house, you brought nothing, and so when you leave the house, you take nothing. If you had brought some toy with you to the house, that you can take with you when you go, but you came empty handed, they allowed you to play with this for a little while, now you have to go empty handed. That's the same reason the Lord says, "When you came to the world, you didn't bring a stitch of clothing with you. When you live the world, you can't take a stitch of clothing with you, because God allowed you to have these things during your lifetime on Earth, houses, lands, motorcycle, money, property, various things, but now you have to go without it". Why? Because it all belonged to the Lord. The Earth is the Lord's, and everything that's in it. Then how did this man happen to get one bit of what belonged to the Lord? It was a loan. Even though it was in his banker's own, it didn't realize it was a loan. But when they die, they realize it was a loan.

You see, a loan, God has every right to take back. If it belonged to you, God wouldn't have a right to take it back. So, we must remember, this is a fundamental principle in the area of money, that no money or material things essentially belong to us. In the Old Testament, there's a verse in Deuteronomy which says the reason why God wanted you to tithe was, as the living Bible paraphrases it, so that you would learn to put God first. I can't find the verse offhand, but I think it's Deuteronomy 16 or 17. God teaches you to tithe so that you might learn to put God first. So it was not only because ten percent belonged to God. That is a terrific deception, which the vast majority of Christians live under (ten percent belongs to God, ninety percent belongs to you). The reason why God taught people to tithe was to teach them to put God first in finances. That means, first of all, give to God. Jesus said, "You have to forsake everything". The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. One hundred percent belongs to God, and we must never forget that in our entire attitude to finances.

Now, that delivers us from possessiveness. I can't possess that which belongs to God. That's why Jesus said, "You can't be my disciple unless you forsake all of your possessions. Everything that is your possession must be given up to God". Jesus possessed nothing, otherwise we can't be followers of Him who possessed nothing, if we are going to possess something which essentially belongs to the world. The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, and if I ever begin to possess that which is essentially the Lord's, I am a thief, and if I am a thief, I cannot serve God effectively. That's why it's very important for us to have a clear understanding of this if we are to handle money in a right way. This is so important, and we've got to teach our people this.

That is the reason why I never teach people to tithe, and I have never tithed in my whole life, and I thank God that I have never got into that bondage. I have been free in that area, and I want other people to be free in this area. What the New Testament teaches you read from Acts Chapter 2 where the New

Covenant age began, right up to the book of Revelation, and you will not find one verse that teaches tithing. So, where do people get this teaching about tithing? Entirely from the Old Testament. Well, then you might as well teach them to offer lambs as sacrifices. Why don't you teach them that? You might as well teach them to keep from Friday 6:00 PM to Saturday 6:00 PM as the Sabbath. Why do we go and select this one thing out of the Old Testament? I'll tell you: because the pastors love money. That's the only reason why anybody teaches tithing. I challenge anyone to show me one verse from Acts Chapter 2 to Revelation 22 that teaches tithing. How is it that the apostles made a mistake in this matter, if tithing is so important, and they didn't even mention it once? And if we teach tithing, then when the Seventh Day Adventist teaches keeping the Sabbath. He says, "Well, you teach tithing, I teach the Sabbath. Both are in the Old Testament, and if you say that's wrong, well, this is wrong too". We need to see this clearly and get rid of this human tradition that's pervaded Christianity.

How are we to teach people to give? That we will come to in a moment, but first of all we need to understand that no money belongs to us, and if I want to be a disciple of Jesus, I've got to get rid of this possessive attitude towards money and things, and say, "I don't want to possess. Lord, it's yours". And then I begin to use even the money I use for food, clothing, and shelter, as a loan God has given me, and then I learn to be faithful even in the use of it. Otherwise, you find these rich people who tithe. Even if they do tithe, they give ten percent and say, "the rest is ours, we can spend it as we like". Where did they get that deceptive teaching from? From the pastors who taught them to tithe, who taught them "therefore, the ninety percent belongs to you, you can use it as you like". But Jesus said, "Who told you that ninety percent belongs to you? Nothing belongs to you". Then we are faithful with everything we have.

This is what we need to understand primarily: "I brought nothing in the world, I can take nothing out, because it all belongs to the world".

Another principle we need to understand regularly is Luke 16, and verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon". "Mammon" is a general word which means "earthly riches". It includes money, property, possessions, shirts, pants, scooters, cycles, everything goes under the general heading "mammon", not just money, but all Earthly riches. And here it speaks about serving: "You cannot serve God and mammon". You can use mammon and serve God, but you cannot serve mammon and serve God. That's a fundamental principle.

I had to decide right at the beginning of my life if I wanted to be a servant of God, and if I had finished with the service of mammon. Because when we are born into the world, all of us grow up serving mammon. Children, they are possessive. You give a child a few toys, and when some other child wants to come and play with his toys, what does he say? "That's mine!". "It's not God's, it's mine, and you can't have it!". You see, that possessiveness to the things of mammon is there from our childhood. "Hey, you are wearing my shirt," one brother tells another in a home. So, we grow up as servants of mammon, and then a day comes when we decide to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and we say, "Now I'm going to serve God", but some people haven't broken that service of mammon and try to serve God, and their whole life is a confusion. We need to understand clearly, "I am not going to serve mammon anymore. I am finished with it". That means, "Now I'm only going to serve God. Mammon does not enter into my thinking in my service of God. Now, most of you have secular jobs. You may not be as faced with this problem as someone who is in full-time Christian work, and someone who is in full-time Christian work needs to settle this once and for all, very clearly, "I am not going to serve mammon or for mammon. I'm going to serve God". Which means, if God has called me to do a particular job, I'm going to do it whether someone gives me gifts, or does not

give me gifts, whether I get money, or I do not get money, if I don't get a house to live in, I'll still do that. If I get a house to live in, I'll do that, if I don't get a house to live in, I'll sleep on the street and do that. If I can't get food to eat, I'll do that without eating food, because God has called me to do this job, you see? This is the only way anybody can serve God, but if a man says "I'll serve God if I get a house to live in, and a certain amount of gifts to sustain me in that particular city or village's standard of living". I tell you, they are servants of mammon, because when they stop getting so much they will stop doing that service.

What about all of these people who work in Christian organizations? They say they have a burden for literature ministry, and radio ministry, and gospel recording ministry, and other ministries. But I want to ask these people. "Will you continue to have that burden if they stop paying you next month, or will that burden finally vanish into thin air? Where was this burden that you had until last month when they paid your salary, that vanished all of the sudden when they said, 'Now, from next month on we're not going to pay you any money'" ? Those who have a burden, continue to work. There won't be one person left in that organization, so I tell people who work in Christian organizations, be honest. Don't say you are serving God, say you are earning your living. There is nothing wrong with that. Just like anybody in a government office, earning their living, you are working in a Christian office earning your living, and you won't keep working in a government office if they stopped paying you, will you? Does anyone have a burden to serve a government organization without pay? No. Exactly the same way that man works in a Christian organization. It's a lot of humbug when they say they are serving the Lord. If you are really serving God, you would serve God even if you don't get money. You would continue to do that work, if you were a shepherd in a local assembly only as long as they gave you gifts, you are a servant of mammon without a doubt, not because it's God's call. If God called you, how could you stop serving them just because one month they didn't give you any gifts? That's a terrific deception. And how many pastors are out there who will continue to serve a flock if they don't get any gifts? We know that those are truly the servants of God. They are doing it because of a calling.

Now, the people of God may be very good to us, and they may be giving us gifts, but this is the point: Imagine myself one month, in this particular assembly, and they completely forget to give me any gifts. What do I do? Will I go up and say, "Hey, you didn't pay me my salary". I can use more spiritual language than that and express it in clever ways, but essentially it is the same thing: "You haven't paid me my salary". In other words, I've done a job last month and you didn't pay me for it. Who am I serving? The people; I get my pay from the people. If you serve God, whom do you go to if you are in need? God. If I am working at this company, I don't go to that company to collect my salary. I go to these people and say, "Hey, you didn't give me my salary". If you go to man to get your salary and gifts, that means you're a servant to man. No. On a secular job that is alright, because you are working for them, but I am talking about being a servant of God. We go to God. That's why I say we do not let people know our financial needs.

As a church, we serve God. If we have a financial need, we do not tell anybody about it. We may talk about it in our own family circle, and pray in our family circle, but not tell anyone else about it. Supposing I have a personal financial need in my life, I can share it with my wife and children in family prayer. I say, "Well, children, we need some money. Let's pray together", but not go to my neighbor or my friends. The way if our church has a need, in the church family we can share it, but not outside, because we are serving God. We say, "Father, here is a financial need". Now, I just want to tell you, we have operated on that principle in this church for the last eight years, ever since we've started. We have never taken a collection, we just put a box there so that people are not forced to give. If some brings a collection bag in

front of your nose, you have got to put something inside, even for decency's sake, even if you put twenty five cents, that's something, and nobody knows how much you are putting in, but at least for decency's sake, you've got to put your hand into the bag. You see, we don't want to embarrass anybody like that. The Bible says "give cheerfully, and give secretly", so we put boxes there, for eight years we've done that, and said, "Those who want to give, give". Try your best to give when nobody is looking, and, if you give, give cheerfully. Nobody is there to check up on you. If there is some brother sitting in the assembly who had not dropped one dime in the box for the last eight years, we don't know about it, only God. And if someone dropped thousands, again he gets no credit from us, only God knows about it, and we can testify to this: We have never sent one report, or send one photograph, or send one prayer letter, or send one hinting letter, or even a private letter for our needs, asking for any type of gifts, or even hinting to any person in all of these eight years. What about when we built this building? Exactly the same principle right from the time we bought this land until the completion of what we have now, we have never sent one prayer letter, never asked anybody for funds, we have received from the offering box, we have received from different people who sent us checks who heard about us. We never asked any of them, never, and if they want any thanks, they've got to get it from the Lord, not from us, or any gifts they sent us, and therefore nobody has any control over us. Nobody can say, "Well now that we gave you money we have a right to control what you are doing there, we want to try and run this, and you must not do this, and you must do that, and you must invite is. No such thing, it's all entirely in our hands. We are a local church, completely self-governing because we are one hundred percent under the Lord, and we are dependant upon no one for our finances.

So, let's bear this in mind, that if you want to build a New Testament, you must try and follow New Testament principles of finances. Otherwise, we will not be able to build a New Testament church if we follow the principles in every other area except the area of finances. So, Luke 16:13, "You cannot serve God and mammon". We have found all of our needs met. When we have conferences we never ask people to pay. We trust God to provide needs. We don't take a collection, but we say, "Lord, you'll provide". Our calling is to serve, and feed them, and take care of those who come, and God will provide the needs, and He has always done that in all of these years.

And the same thing applies to my personal needs and anyone of us who serves God. We really have to believe that, "If I serve God, He will provide all of my needs", and I have said this: If I run into financial need at any time, I won't first of all ask God to provide it. First of all, I'll say, "Lord, is there some area where I have not sought the Kingdom of God first? Because the Bible says that's another principle of finances in the Kingdom (Matthew 6:33), "Seek the Kingdom of God first in His righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you". All our material needs will be added unto us if we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first. All things will be added to us, everything that we need. So, if it's not added to me, what should I do? Check up my life. Am I seeking God's kingdom first? Am I seeking his righteousness? Am I living by faith in God, or have I been living by faith in good, generous believers who will take care of my needs? I tell you, many full-time workers who say they live by faith in God, they would find that their faith is actually in good, generous believers who provide their needs. They may not ask for their gifts, but they know it will come.

You see, Elijah received food from the ravens regularly, every morning at eight o'clock in the morning. I think Elijah was in danger at eight o'clock in the morning of not looking to God, but looking for the crows, and that's what happens: A full-time worker starts trusting in God, and sees the supernatural miracle of crows bringing food. After a few months of it, on the first of the month, he's not looking to God, he's looking

for the crows, and then what we have to pray is that the crows stop coming, and God says to Elijah, "You are in danger of looking for the crow, instead of looking to me, and now I will provide your needs. Go to Sarepta". And we think that in Sarepta there is a rich business man with a fat bank balance with which to support Elijah. I can imagine him going past, wondering who will support him in Sarepta. A widow, and a widow who is about to eat her last meal and ready to die. What is the message God is trying to teach Elijah? "I'm not going to make you dependant on human resources. I want you to trust me, look to me".

Brothers, God wants us to double up our faith in Him, but we don't look to human beings. What is the meaning of circumcision? In the Old Testament, circumcision was the mark of the covenant. They had to cut out the skin of the flesh and throw it off. In the New Testament we are told in Philippians 3:3, Circumcision means no confidence in the flesh. That means I cut off confidence in the flesh. I have no confidence in any man. Jeremiah 17:5 says, "cursed is the man who leans upon the arm of flesh, he will be like a battered tree". God may supply my needs through men, that is another thing. but why should I lean on them? Once I begin to lean on people, they will have power over me. That's why we must not lean on anybody. If somebody gives me a gift, he must know clearly that I don't lean on him, "Brother, I don't lean on you. You are not going to have any power over me just because you put a hundred rupees in an envelope and give it to me. Even if you put five thousand rupees in an envelope and give it to me, I'm sorry, you're not going to have any power over me. You give it to the Lord, then seek your thanks from the Lord, don't seek any thanks from me, and don't expect that you can control any area of my life. Don't expect that you can prevent me from speaking the truth that will hurt you just because you are one of the rich people in the congregation who happens to give me gifts. Well, I will speak the truth that will hurt you, you may get offended and go away, and regret that you ever gave me that five thousand rupees one day in that envelope.

We've had people who got offended and left. Yes, we do not believe in anyone having power over us in the church, just because they give us money. It's very important. We lean upon God alone, we do not lean upon men. We do not care for the rich or the great, or the westerners, anyone who has money. We are not interested in them. We believe in leaning upon the Lord. The Lord supplies our needs, and the Lord provides us with all that we need according to his riches and his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God will supply all of your needs". Not all that we want. There may be a lot of things that we want which we don't need. So, these are some of the principles of finances in God's Kingdom. God will supply all of your needs, not human beings. What if we are at church and need money to put a building up? God will supply all of our needs. What about if the needs are very great? Are God's riches enough to take care of that?

Turn to the book of Haggai in the Old Testament, Haggai Chapter 2 verse 8. You see, Haggai was stirring up the people to build the Temple of The Lord after they came back from Babylon, and you know, building the temple back in those days used a tremendous amount of money, if you want to build it anyway, and the way Solomon built it, with gold on the walls & all of that. And what did Haggai tell these people? The Lord of Hosts says, "'the silver is Mine, and the Gold is Mine', declares the Lord of Hosts". But where is the silver and gold going to come from for the Jews to build the Temple. Is it going to drop from heaven? No. Verse 7, "I will shake the nation, and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory". "People are going to give me money. Sirius, king of Persia will donate a few millions". It's like that. God's got control because all of the silver is His, and all of the gold is His, and if I believe and if I believe that all of the money in the world is in, then whom should I go to when I need money? To the one who has it! And if he's my Father, it's wonderful. Like they sing in that chorus, "I'm richer than a millionaire

because my Father own the heaven and the Earth, and therefore I don't have to go to men.

Turn to the book of Genesis, Chapter 14. Whenever we read Abraham brought Lot and the people of Sodom and the goods back who were taken back, and the king said, "give the people to me, and take the goods for yourself". And Abraham said, "I have sworn to the Lord God, owner of the Heaven and Earth (You see what he said? "owner of heaven and Earth") that I won't take a thread or a shoelace from you lest you say, 'I have made Abraham rich'". Why? Because the king of Sodom was a godless man. If a rich unbeliever comes to you one day, and offers you a large amount of money, say, "Well, I hear that you folks are putting up a building for your church to meet, and here is ten thousand rupees," and you know the man is an unbeliever, what do you do? I hope you'll do what Abraham did: "Well my dear friend, I appreciate you offering that money, but we have certain principles, and one of those principles is that God wants you to give your heart to Him first, before He can take your money, and I'm sorry, I don't want to offend you, my dear friend, but I can't take this money," when all of the time my building project my desperately need that very money which this man has offered, to turn to him and say "Sorry. One day you will say, you made Abraham rich, one day you will say that you built this building, and you are not going to get that credit. I don't want a thread or a shoelace. Give your heart to the Lord first".

We read in the third Epistle of John, in verse seven it says about the full-time workers who went around preaching the gospel in those days, "they went out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles". They accepted nothing from the heathens. Did they accept it from the believers? Obviously. The verse itself must indicate that when believers offer them gifts, they accept it, he says in verse eight, "Therefore, we are to support such men, because thus we can become fellow workers of the troop". And how do you become fellow workers of the troop? You give money to the Lord's work and to the Lord's workers, but the Lord's workers take nothing from the heathens, Abraham took nothing from the king of Sodom, you know the story of Elisha, 2nd Kings Chapter 5? Naaman, the general of they Syrian army came to be healed of leprosy, and to humble Naaman's pride, Elisha never even came out of the house when Naaman came and knocked on the door. I think if it was some poor man from Syria who had come with his leprosy, Elisha would have come himself and laid his hands on him there, and healed him on the spot, but when the general came, Elisha just sat in the house, and sent a message through the servant.

We need to understand God's principle in God's work. God has chosen the poor in the world, rich in faith. Honor the poor, and humble the rich, because God is in that business, and a servant of God must be in the same business. So, we read (2nd kings 5:9), "and Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house," and Elisha's house I'm sure was just a small hut. From his seat to the door must have been about five feet, but he wouldn't go that five feet to see Naaman. He sent a servant: "Go and tell that man to wash in the Jordan seven times". Verse 11, Naaman was furious. "I thought he would at least come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord, and wave his hand all over place". He was expecting that, you see, and Elisha knew this fellow though he was so import, that the prophet would come and say, "Yes sir! What can I do for you?" just like so many full-time workers get so flabbergasted and flustered when some rich man comes into the congregation. Oh, you couldn't get Elijah to do that. He put Naaman in his proper place. You can't be a servant of God unless you have learned how to put the Naamans in your congregation in their proper place, it says in James chapter 2. You tell the rich believer, "Yes sir, please come and sit here". Because he invited you to a scrumptious dinner last week, and he's got a power over you now. You're no longer a servant of God now, you're a servant of that rich believer. He might invite you again next week, and give you a gift now and then, bought you a pressure cooker for your house, and now you say, "Yes, brother. Please, come and sit here", and to the

poor brother, "Yeah, yeah. You can sit there. I don't have time right now to see you". What is such a man? He's not a servant of God, he's a servant of mammon, and he is full of such people, and we must never get into that category! No man must have any power over us, particularly the rich. I tell you, all rich people try to have power over the servants of God. Beware of them. I tell you from my experience, I refuse to let any rich man have power over me. Don't let any person have power over you. Particularly the rich and the influential in the congregation try that, and Elisha said, "no".

And Naaman had to humble himself, had to dip himself seven times in the Jordan, and came back. He was very grateful, and then he returned to the man of God (verse 15), and this time he didn't stand at the door. He humbled himself, and came inside the house, because he knew Elisha was not going to come out, and Naaman came inside and stood before Elisha. That's the dignity of these Old Testament prophets, and he said, "Now I know there is no god in all of the Earth. Here is some money," and Elisha said (verse 16), "As the lives before whom I stand, I will take nothing, and Naaman said, 'Please, take a little bit', and he said, 'no'." Why? Because there was a witness in his spirit, "Don't take anything from this man". But his reason may have said, "But now, maybe he's become a believer now that the Lord has healed him. Surely he is a believer, now, and there is nothing wrong with taking from believers". But he had the witness in his spirit, and you see immediately afterwards the reason: the man is still not a believer. Verse 18, "In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant that when my master goes into the house of the idol Rimmon to worship there and he leans on my hand, I have to bow myself before that idol, or else my master (the King of Syria) will get offended. I hope the Lord will pardon me". Elisha says, "You'll have your request. You just have leniency in your soul. Go in peace". He gave him his request, but sent leniency in his soul. "I'm not going to force you. If you want to bow down to that idol who couldn't heal you of your leprosy, you still don't want to be a believer, go ahead". He let him go. He was a compromiser, he was an idolater even though he was healed, just like many people whom the Lord healed in his (Elisha's) lifetime never became his disciples. We've seen people in our midst who have been healed, demons cast out, and they have not followed the Lord. We have seen that, just like it was in the days of the Lord. Naaman was like that, and Elisha had a witness in his heart, "don't take it".

But Gehazi, he was this other type of full-time worker we generally see in our country. He said, "Oh, dear! What an idiot my master is! He didn't ask for it, he didn't send a prayer letter, he didn't hint, he didn't do anything. The man came and offered it, and he still didn't take it". And he said, "I will run after Naaman".

You know, in 2nd Kings you read about Elisha running after Elijah, from this place, to that place, to the other place. What for? For the double portion of anointing. Here is another fellow also running, not for a double portion of the anointing, but a double portion of the money. It is a picture of the two types of the servants of God. Gehazi, if he had run after Elisha one day for a double portion of Elisha's spirit, he would have been a prophet in his realm. Instead he ran after Naaman. He got what he ran after. He went to Naaman, and Naaman said, is everything alright? And Gehazi says, "Yes. Just now we have two more students come our Bible school, and we want to put up some extra building, and they need some uniforms, clothes. We just want to know whether the Lord would lead you to support these two brothers who have come to Bible school, and the lord would bless you for you service to him. And Naaman says, "Sure, take this". This is the wonderful thing: He asked only for one talent in the last part of verse 22, and Naaman said take two talents. It says later on "he urged him", that means Gehazi acted humbly in the beginning, "Well Lord, I really don't want two talents, I mean, one talent would be enough", hoping that Naaman would press. Naaman says, "Please take it", and Gehazi says, "Alright brother, if you really want me to take it. The Lord bless you, my God will supply all of your needs according to his riches and glory by

Christ Jesus" (laughs). And he takes the two talents, and comes home, and it says here, before he came to the hill, he took it from the hands of the servants (like the people who say, "just make sure the check is made out in my name"), and then he sent the people away, and he went to his house, and deposited them in the bank in his own account, and then he put on the pious look again and stood before Elijah. Is that just something that happened three thousand years ago? It's happening today.

We need to know to steer clear of all of this humbug that goes on in the name of Jesus Christ. And don't say you are not doing it if you are part of an organization that does it. You are also responsible, your hands are dirty. Why are you staying that that organization? Why are you staying in a church where the pastor is doing such things? Have you ever gone and rebuked the pastor, shown him that it was unscriptural? No? They are trying a revival in Babylon. Brother, you'll waste your life. "He who has ears, let him hear". Don't be part of a system that is part of all of these ungodly practices. Come out of all of that, follow God's principles in finance. Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Don't go after these Naamans and these Americans, or Europeans, or anyone who can give you money. Seek God, trust Him, he will supply all of your needs. Get rid of all of this pious language, don't write letters to people who say, "If you have a need, let us know", "well brother, if the Lord needs you, here is my bank account and here is my address". That' begging, that's hinting, leave it to God to supply your needs. Trust Him. He will test us by sending people our way who offer us money when we need it, and He will test us and see if we will take it when we know the person's heart is not right with God. It's not only that the person is an unbeliever.

I remember once I went to speak in a place, and I spoke the truth of God. It was just one meeting, and they gave me a hundred rupees when I came awake. Afterwards I heard that they didn't respond to that message. They criticized it, they were upset, and I have a feeling that they were sorry that they invited me, and that they had to part with the hundred rupees that came to me, and God said to me, "Return that money to them". I didn't want to offend them, because they were believers of a Pentecostal group, so I wrote out a check for a hundred rupees in the name of that organization, and I said, "I would just like to send you a gift for your assembly". Of course, they approved to receive the gift, but I washed my hands of that. I say to myself, "I don't want money from unbelievers. I don't even want money from those that do not accept the message that we preach. No, we don't want it".

I remember that it has happened at other times, when someone wanted to give us a gift for our assembly here, someone from another place, and I wasn't too sure whether that person understood all that we stood for, so I sent that person Hidden Treasures regularly for some time so that he knows clearly what we stand for, and I didn't reply his letters for some time whether we would accept his gift or not. We needed it for the building, but I said it's very important that the person understands clearly what we stand for.

God will test us to see if we grab as soon as somebody offers, or whether we live by the principles of God's Kingdom. So many people live by grabbing. They do not beg, they do not send prayer letters, but when somebody offers it like the King of Sodom they will take it. Abraham didn't send a prayer letter to the king of Sodom, the King of Sodom just came and offered it. We are not to grab, that's the test to see whether we are fit to represent God's Kingdom or not. Jesus didn't go around grabbing if someone offered it.

We need to understand the principles of God's Kingdom, and we must be free from not only service of money, even the love of material things. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". "The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil".

Let's turn to 1st Timothy Chapter 6. Timothy was Paul's most wholehearted co-worker, but even to Timothy, Paul had to write. Verse 10 and 11 of 1st Timothy, Chapter 6, "The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. Flee from these things you man of God".

Supposing you were some great servant of God's closest co-worker, and you worked with him for, say, 15 years, and one day he writes to you, "Brother, run away from the love of money," what thoughts would go through your mind when you get a letter like that from this service of God? (I.E.) "You mean after fifteen years with this man, he still thinks I love money"? Would you get offended, or would you humble yourself and say, "Lord, that's right. The love of money dwells in my flesh even today. I want to cleanse myself from it".

He (Paul) teaches one thing: If Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit could tell Timothy [this]? You know what type of man Timothy was? Philippians 2:19-21, Paul said about Timothy, "I have no man like him, because Timothy does not seek his own in anything. He will be generally concerned for your welfare". Even such a man as Timothy who still does not seek his own in anything, do you believe that still a little bit of the love of money can be in your flesh? If you don't believe that, it just proves you haven't seen what lies in your flesh yet. I want to tell you brothers, every one of us sitting here, you and I: today the love of money is still in our flesh. Don't deceive yourself. When you come to the place of Timothy, it will still be there. It is a process by which we cleanse ourselves, and I need to judge myself and cleanse myself with it. My attitude to money, by the grace of God, is much better today that it was eight years ago. There's no doubt about that. But if I think that I have thoroughly cleansed myself in this area, I am deceiving myself in this area. One of the things I had started praying to God a few years ago was this: "Lord, give me the same attitude to money and material things that Jesus had", and I want to confess today, I haven't arrived there yet. I do not have, today, the same attitude to money and material things that Jesus had. I am pressing on to perfection in this area, and therefore I am constantly judging myself in this area, and it gets better and better. If any one of you deceive yourself that you already got the attitude of money and material things that Jesus had, you'll never discover anything more in your flesh.

Paul wrote to Timothy; Timothy humbled himself to accept the exaltation: "flee from these things...". Even though your attitude in this area may be a million times better in the area of money than the average full time worker in India, still it had not come to the attitude of Jesus, has it? No. Then don't we need to cleanse ourselves? How do we cleanse ourselves? Acts 20, Verse 35 says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". I need to judge myself when I get a gift, I need to judge myself when I give a gift.

Supposing I get a gift from someone, I have to ask myself, "Has that made me a little more happy? Does a little more joy come into my life?" (it may not be a gift, it may be a promotion in your job or some other increment). What does it prove? It proves that your joy was in the Lord, plus your money and job. Doesn't it prove it? Yes, otherwise, how could your joy increase? As it says in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord alone always". If your joy was only in the Lord, how could your joy increase when a little bit of money was increased in your salary, or some gift came your way? No, it does not increase; Your joy will be just the same because the Lord hasn't changed.

Or, one day, you lose some money and your joy goes down. What does it show? A little bit of your joy was with that money and went after that money. It wasn't all in that money, you are still rejoicing in salvation and other things, but a little bit was with that money and went after that money. Doesn't it prove that?

How do I know these things? Because I discovered it in my own flesh. I say, I've got volumes of services in my flesh, and I set and study these volumes of sermons, sermon notes from my flesh. Like other preachers, they've 57 sermon outlines in their library, I've got a few thousands in my flesh. I've just got to pick them out and say, "Lord, you've taught me a few things, and I'm sure it will help others, even if they act as if it's not helping them, because they've got the same flesh as me. Even though they pretend to be spiritual and act as if they are way beyond all of this, I know it's helping them, it's bound to help them. They don't have a different flesh. When I test myself, I sure it will help them, that's a simple rule. So, I've seen this, and I said, "Lord, I repent of it, Lord, I felt a little happy there when that person gave me a gift. Oh God, please cleanse me. May I come to the place where whether a person gives or doesn't give, it doesn't disturb me one bit, and my joys won't leave the Lord. I've lost that money, and I've thought about it all day, I lost a hundred rupees". And the lord says, "You really think you lost a lot of joy with that money"? I get right, and I say, "Cleanse me so that if I lose a thousand rupees one day, it won't rob me of my joy".

I've learned to be careful, yes. I've had my pocket fixed, and now I am more careful where to put my money. Be careful, yes, but let's not lose our joy. And when we give to others do we have to pray and fast, (i.e.) "Will it hurt that brother, Lord, if I give him fifteen rupees", and pray and fast for one month, and I give him fifteen rupees, but when someone gives, I say, "Yes, Lord, I'm sure this is from you" (laughs)? Our attitude for giving is completely different from our attitude of receiving, and God is trying to change my attitude in this area: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Purify my, that my joy is not in money, but only in the Lord, and if I give, God will give back to me.

Give cheerfully, give as God has prospered you, give freely. This verse that Jesus gave to his disciples when they went out, "Freely you have received, freely give". Learn that. You say, "I didn't receive it freely. I worked hard for it for thirty one days, and got it from the factory". You mean you own it now? Then you haven't understood the first thing we talked today. Even your salary is a free gift from the Lord. "Freely receive, freely give". I know people who can't go to work half the month because they are sick, and their salary is cut. Don't think that we got it through our own ability and cleverness. It's God's free gift; Freely we receive, freely give.

There is an Old Testament example of a man called Balaam. Numbers 22-25 is the passage where a king sent for him and said, "Please curse these Israelites for me," Balaam went and asked the Lord, "Lord, should I go with him?", and the Lord said, "No". So the king knew he could handle full-time workers and preachers. He said, "I know how to get this fellow. We'll just send him a little more money, and promise him a little more honor". So he sent more dignified people and offered him a little more money, and it worked. Balaam said, "Well, let me seek the Lord's will again, maybe I didn't hear it clearly last time", and so he goes that night to ask God, "Lord, these folks have come again, Lord. Are you sending them? I sent them away once, and they came back again. Maybe it's you, Lord. Show me your will". And all of the time, his heart is interested in this honor to see the king. That's like the prime minister inviting us to have honor in this country. And you know what God said? "Go". "There we go! I was sure I had the wrong answer last time. Maybe it was the devil who told me last time not to go. God want me to go" (laughs). He didn't realize that he had already been tested, and he had failed. He had the love of money in his heart, and God sent lenience in his soul, and he died. A man who was once a prophet of God ended up as a servant of the devil because of his secret love of money.

Well, what I want to say is, if God sees a secret love of money in your heart, sometimes he will let you go your own way, because he sees that you are interested in it, and he sees that you know there is some financial profit by going there, so God says "Go". He's not going to stop us, but don't think that you are

going under the leading of God. Even Balaam's donkey could see the angel of the Lord standing in front of him, and Balaam got so blind that he couldn't see the angel of the Lord stopping him. What was it that blinded this man's eyes? The love of money. Even that ass was free from it. Think of that, that he couldn't see the angel of the Lord which his donkey could see. What a terrible state of affairs.

Those things are written for our instruction. Balaam, Gehazi, and in the New Testament, Judas Iscariot. They are all written for our instruction.

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