

## Message #115 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

### *"The Moneychangers"*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I need to talk about something that God has laid on my heart concerning the financial prosperity which is so often the central core of sermons in today's current church. Many ministries are built on nothing more than the promise of more money, more houses, more lands, more automobiles, more clothes, more food, more of everything. But God put something in my heart about the message of financial prosperity for his children. And this is what he said to me. "I long to bless my children with finances, even above and beyond their imagination, but, every time I do, they begin to consume it upon their lusts. As soon as they get some money in their pocket, they begin to think it is their money to do what they want to do with it, and then their flesh takes over and they begin to spend it on themselves instead of using it for my glory. Instead of the widows and the orphans being sought out and fed and clothed, they seek how they can feed and clothe their own flesh more gloriously than ever before. My people have committed the sin of Sodom over and over again. Sodom's sin was fulness of bread. My people want to be gluttons for things of this world instead of using the blessings I bestow upon them for the good of righteousness. Surely, there is sin in the camp of the Lord, for men have gone after the gold of Ophir, when I have specifically warned them not to do so."

Now, God has spoken to my heart, and he has put this word into me, and whether you like what I'm saying today or not, I'm still going to have to say it. At this point, I don't have any choice. Or, at least, the alternate choice to say nothing is not something I would care to attempt. God is speaking in these last days to a chosen people. We are a chosen generation. But we must not be slack when it comes to observing all that Jesus has commanded us to do. Romans 6:5-12 says,

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we will also be in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. 11 Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts of it.”

Do you hear what these verses are telling us? It says that we will be changed into the likeness of him, but this will only be accomplished if we have been planted with him in his death. Unless we are crucified with Christ, we have no hope of eternal life with him. John 12:24-25 says, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. 25 He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

We are the seed that Jesus Christ has planted in this world. We cannot bring forth fruit until we die. When we die to self, we then become crucified with Christ, and then we can bear much fruit. To be crucified with Christ is not an easy thing. Everything in our flesh and blood bodies resists us. Every time we attempt to turn away from the lusts of our flesh, we fight an unending battle. But spiritual warfare is not a new concept to Christians. However, there is a new spiritual attack which has loomed on the church horizon which tells Christians that they can take the blessings that God bestows upon us and use them to wallow in the delights that this world offers.

We are supposed to be Christians. We are supposed to be followers of Christ. What has happened to the church of today that makes us think that God wants to bless us with earthly trinkets? Jesus said that it was harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And the reason for this is that the riches of this world are not the blessings of God but are the blessing of Satan. However, God does want to bless us financially. I'm sure of it. So then, how can we be rich and still not be hindered from entering the kingdom of God? The answer lies in the very simple concept of being a steward over the money, instead of owning it. Think about it. God, from time to time, causes certain people to come into great sums of money and assets. And sometimes, maybe not often, but sometimes these people are very godly people, and have a true love for the Lord. However, the safest way to ensure your eternal life with Christ is to make certain you don't take the riches to yourself and spend them on your lusts for the flesh.

1 Corinthians 10:22-24 says, “ Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.” You see, when we begin to let our eyes rove from the things of God and begin to focus on the delights that this world offers, we are actually looking for gifts that come from God's enemy, and not from

God himself. You might think twice before you carry that next trinket or bauble home from the store and put it in your house. God doesn't want us to consume the blessings he wants to give us by blowing all the money on ourselves. God wants us to have enough, but he doesn't want us to have it all. He wants us to be nourished with the things of heaven, but only take that from the earth that we need for our daily lives. Not fullness of bread, but enough to sustain us as sojourners on the earth. We are just passing through. We weren't meant to set up a city and build a wall around it. We are meant to dwell in tents and to be ready to move on at the slightest provocation from God.

We Christians are a peculiar people. At least, we're supposed to be. Peculiar means to be different. We were made to be human beings, but not eternally human. God's purpose for us is to turn from the secular life of this world and to redirect ourselves toward the spiritual life that exemplifies heaven. We were meant to put off the old man of this human flesh, not to put on every flashy article of clothing we can get our hands on. Stewards of God's money is what we're called for, not spenders of God's money. As stewards of God's provision we have a major responsibility, and it should not be taken lightly. There is about ten zillion things in this world that we can do to help people in financial difficulties and to spread the gospel to all people. However, it seems that whenever God's children get more money, it gets spent on fancy stuff rather than the necessities.

Philippians 4:5 tells us to let others see moderation in our lives. Isn't it interesting that churches and ministries seem to be concentrated more and more on the plushness of this world rather than the necessities of this world? Let me ask you something. If you were looking inside a tent dwelling, what kind of furniture do you think you would see, gold embossed thrones, or footstools? No, I'm not suggesting you shouldn't have a soft chair to sit in, but does it have to be extravagant?

It is time though for Christians to be blessed, and not just in spiritual blessings but also financially. There's work to be done. But how is God to bless us if every time he does we turn it into an orgy of shopping? It seems that the concepts of lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life are concepts which the church no longer comprehends. What is so hard about understanding the sinfulness of lusting after things of the eye? What's so hard about recognizing the sin of being caught up in pride? Pride is nothing more than wanting others to see you as somehow better than the way God created you. Is that so hard to understand? It's time to start practicing Christianity before it goes out of style. At least, I think so. Christians are really good at claiming to be Christians with their lips, but they have such a hard time recognizing when the blessings of God start to become opportunities for the flesh.

There is work to be done, and quite frankly, money is a necessity in this world. Although we need to be content with such things that God provides, still we need a certain amount of money to meet the needs of ministry to others, whether that ministry is in providing food and shelter, or ministering the word of God. Either way God wants to bless us. But we need to watch out for the deception which causes us to make God's blessing into a curse.

Now, let me take a minute here and address a major problem we have in the church today. And that is, the requests for money by the different ministries and by your own local church. There is currently a doctrine of prosperity circulating freely among Christians which focuses on money. Now, as I have just been saying, God is saying that financial prosperity is something that he wants to do in the church today, but yet this does not mean that he wants our focus to be on money. In fact, what we need to do is to get our eyes off the money so that God can bless us. When we begin to focus on money, Satan has a great time with us. As soon as we think we're going to get some money, the devil comes in and tempts us to use it improperly. He tells us that this is a blessing from God and that God wants to bless us as a sign of righteousness. That's a lie. God doesn't need to bless us in order for other people to see righteousness in us. In fact, if you have a lot of money, nobody sees Christ in you. The only way people see Jesus Christ in a rich man is when the man is giving it away.

I hear ministers telling people that God wants to bless them. Then I hear them telling people that if they will just send these ministers a lot of money, God will bless them big time. Duh! What do you think is going on? Isn't it interesting that whenever someone is putting on a big push for the people to donate a lot of money, it is always a donation to their own ministries that they're looking for? How much intelligence does it take to see where the ministers want the money to end up? They want to take the money from widows who have very little to give, but they don't live lives comparable to widows. They live lives like the people of Sodom, with fullness of bread. If the ministers were really sincere about you doing God's work, all they would have to do is encourage you to pray for God's will. If you have God's will, you will give all the money God wants you to give and you will give it where God wants you to give it. God's will is all you need. The ministers don't have to make a big song and dance about sending it to them. But then, if they didn't, you might not send it to them and you might send it somewhere else. They wouldn't like that.

A long time ago someone asked me why I seldom preached on tithing, and I told them that tithing was a simple thing. When it comes to tithes and offerings, all you have to know is that you should love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. And if you also love your neighbor as you love yourself, the tithes and offerings will flow out of your pocket and into every proper place it is needed. God's churches and every ministry would have all the money they need. All the widows and the orphans would be provided for. All you have to do is seek the will of the Lord for your life with all the gusto you can. It's simple. Downright simple.

So then, why do the people keep falling for the old song and dance of ministers crying for money? And believe me, many times it really is a song and dance. I've seen some ministers that could have won Oscars for their performance. But the people fall for it because of two reasons. One reason may be because they are naive enough to fall for the song and dance. This is sad, but often is the case. But the other reason is that it appeals to many people according to their own fleshly greed. Many people like the thought of having more money. Greed is mentioned in the

Bible, you know. But I would like you to notice something interesting. Much of the current hawking for money is based on the get principle. Now, the principle that the Bible emphasizes is that it is better to give than to receive. However, the hook that hauls in many fish in the Christian market is the principle of investing. No, the ministers don't call it investing, they call it the principle of sowing seed. They tell people that if they sow the seed of money, God will open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that is sevenfold, or tenfold or a hundred fold, or something like that. Now, the principle is basically true. If we give to God with all our hearts, God will certainly bless us. However, that isn't what the ministers are suggesting. They say that if you give God \$100, he'll turn around and bless you with an amount substantially greater than the \$100 you gave. But look what is really taking place. If you give God \$100, and then start focusing your expectation on a return greater than you gave, you have not given God a single red cent. You haven't given God a gift at all. What you've done is to make an investment in God. You have put down your money for some heavenly stock certificates and you are planning in advance on sitting on it for as short a time as possible until you can conveniently cash in the stock for a huge increase.

This is not giving. This is investing. God isn't asking you to invest in him. He is telling you to be crucified daily. He is telling you to love him so much and to love your neighbor so much that you just give and give and give from your heart until you can't give anymore. He wants you to give without expecting anything in return. King David said that he would serve the Lord God even if the Lord God was to slay him. David had a heart after God. He wasn't saying that he served God for what he could get out of him, but he served God as a total submission even if God was to slay him. This is what a giving heart is all about. We need to give to God in earnestness, not being concerned with whether or not it comes back. Yes, it will come back, because God is a magnificent God and a God who blesses us mightily. However, if you are thinking about getting more back than what you're giving, than you aren't really giving anything at all. You investing.

What would you do if someone came up to you in your moment of need and said, here's \$20. Make sure I get back at least that much plus a good sizeable increase. What would your response be? You wouldn't like it, would you. And God doesn't like it either. He doesn't like it when his shepherds fleece the sheep. He wants the shepherds to feed the sheep, not feast on the sheep. And he doesn't want the sheep trying to play the stock market on God. God isn't the banker up in heaven, he's the one that put himself on the cross and died a horrible death for you and me. He didn't call you and me to get rich so we could spend it on luxuries or delicacies. He wants us to stop drooling for money and start treating money like it was meant to be treated. Money is not evil. But the love of money IS evil. If you're investing in God instead of giving to God, then you're guilty of the love of money. You're not trusting that God will provide, you're trusting that he will give you a great return on your investment. You can play this game if you want to, but I'd rather trust God to take care of my future and concentrate on the present day needs of others.

The church is sick. No, not condemned. Not yet. It is sick. It needs to be healed. And we need to let God heal us. But he's not going to heal us just so we can go out and expose ourselves to the

evils around us again and again. He wants so very much to bless his people, but he can't do that until we take the blessing he gives us and begin to use it properly. The gold and silver delights of this world will eventually be turned into pavement. We'll walk on it. It won't be for our decoration. The heavenly Jerusalem is described as having streets of gold and gates of pearl, not so we can drool at the thought of being rich, but so that we can realize that these things are just so much mineral deposits with God. They are just elements that mean nothing to God, for God has all things without an end to his ownership. It is this earth and the temptations of Satan that urge us to wealth.

But the true wealth is in Jesus Christ, and in the inheritance of the saints. Everything else will pass away. Therefore, be careful. For if Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven while you're occupied with your investments, you just might be left behind.

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Jesus said, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. His disciples didn't know what he meant at first, but finally they understood that the Pharisees had developed a doctrine which really wasn't in line with the word of God at all. The Pharisees, the scribes, and the priests did a great business in money. They even stole houses from the widows, but did it while trying to make it seem like they were being righteous. We know that in most cases the Scribes and Pharisees were wicked, and that the people suffered from them. But most of the people didn't see the wickedness that was evident to the eyes of Jesus. Jesus knew what the Pharisees and priests were doing, and why they wanted to kill him. He was a big threat to their financial enterprise and to their pride of position. And eventually, they did kill Jesus. They thought they had succeeded in preserving themselves, but they didn't realize that in killing Jesus they had signed their own eternal death warrant.

We're seeing the very same thing take place in this current day. The church is money hungry, and the doctrine of the shepherds is fleecing the sheep in record numbers. Sometimes the song and dance of the ministers is equivalent to a command performance before kings. But they aren't entertaining the King Of All Kings, they are entertaining the devil.

But, I want you to take notice of something interesting. When Jesus was on earth, he came to the city of Jerusalem and went into the temple. Taking several cords, he wrapped them together, making a whip. With this whip he drove the money changers out of the temple. He overturned their tables, and you can imagine the coins flying in every direction. But notice who Jesus did this to. It was the money changers. It was those people who used the temple of God to make money. And it was these same money merchants that Jesus drove out. It will happen again when Jesus cleanses the temple again. Only this time, the temple he cleanses will be us, for we are the temple. If you're a money changer, God will drive you out. If you are a person with a heart after God, and want his will more than anything else, he will take you home. The choice is yours.