

How to Smash the Altar of Loving Money and Appearance

Ananias and Sapphira, two subjects of Satan's deceit, were struck dead before the apostles for pride, hypocrisy and lying to Holy Spirit. The issue was over money and giving to be seen of men (Matt. 6).

What Jesus was dealing with there in the young body at Jerusalem was the love of appearance. Think of how many things are done in Christianity today because of the love of appearance and to be seen of men. It is a dark motive that was seeking to mar the purity of the early church and has succeeded in marring the church of today.

"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land?'" (Acts 5:3).

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not in keeping back part of the price of the land, for no one required them to give it all. Their sin was in lying about it. But why did they agree to lie about it? Was it not because of pride and the desire to be seen of men? There was a hypocrisy working in them. They wanted to appear generous. The love of appearance literally killed them.

The Deceitfulness of Riches

Operating under this false pretense of the love of appearance is foundational to the life, power, and effectiveness of the church. Some of it has to do with our attitude toward money, our use of it, and the greed and covetousness that has been attached to it.

Think of the examples in Scripture about the deceitfulness of riches and how many have succumbed to the associated pride and

covetousness.

For example, Balaam was a genuine prophet. The Spirit of God would come upon him and he would hear from the Lord (Num. 22:8-9; 24:2), but money ruined him. God warned him, but he didn't listen (Num. 22:12-13).

The Scriptures list him in several places as an example of one whose heart was not right toward money.

"They have forsaken the right way and have gone astray. They follow the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Pet. 2:15).

"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily after the error of Balaam for a reward, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" (Jude 11).

Simon the sorcerer is another example of one who desired to buy the power of God so he could be someone great, as he was when he was a sorcerer in Samaria (Acts 8:9-24).

Elisha's servant Gehazi is yet another example of one who ran after the money when his master Elisha refused it (2 Kings 5:20-27). Isn't interesting that Gehazi also lied to Elisha about the silver and change of garments he received from Naaman? But God revealed the truth of the matter to Elisha.

Without discernment, you can be in the presence of a minister but not realize they have corrupted themselves. Once spiritual things have a "For Sale" sign, that attitude becomes a leaven that leavens the whole lump.

God gave us the Word so we don't have to be ignorant of spiritual matters. He gave us his Spirit so we may discern truth from error.

Comparing Money Now to Then

Compare these quotes on money from our day's most popular

preachers to those of centuries past.

Now

“The Bible says that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. That’s the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce. I’m following Jesus’ steps.”

I’ve chosen to refrain from naming the said preacher. I don’t want to discredit all the good he may have done. Blowing out someone else’s candle does not make mine burn any brighter. Besides, the point here is to keep the main point the main point and not gossip about how all preachers are after your money. Not all preachers are that way. Two wrongs don’t make a right. Thank God for the many pure-hearted preachers in the land today who have not been tainted by greed and the love of money.

Nevertheless, how can such a careless and erroneous statement come out of the mouth of this popular preacher, who has done much good? So following Jesus has been reduced to driving a Rolls Royce? But what does the Bible say?

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God a person endures grief, suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you are being beaten for your sins you patiently endure? But if when doing good and suffering for it, you patiently endure, this is favorable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Pet. 2:19-22).

One of the greatest examples given in Scripture for following in Jesus’ steps has to do with suffering wrongfully. That is the example we are to follow. (See also Matt. 10:25 and John 15:20 among many others that teach us how we are to follow our Master.)

Here's another one:

"Give \$10 and receive \$1000; Give \$1000 and receive \$100,000. ... Give one house and receive one hundred houses or a house worth one hundred times as much. Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane ... in short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal."

So Mark 10:30 has been reduced to a "very good deal"? How pathetic. What was meant to be a Scripture to forsake all for the gospel and suffer persecution for that kind of consecrated lifestyle has been reduced to a verse about money and materialism. What an example of corrupted motives. Once again, I refrain from naming the source of this erroneous quote, only to say that this ministry is one of the most popular in America today.

Does Mark 10:30 really mean that kind of hundred-fold return on all your giving? Let's read that verse in context. First of all, this entire statement spoken by Jesus starts with verse 29:

"Jesus answered, 'Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left a house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, who shall not receive a hundred times as much now in this age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecution, and in the age to come, eternal life'" (Mark 10:29-30).

There is nothing in this verse that is in context with the quote from this popular preacher. It has nothing to do with sowing money, houses and airplanes in order to reap one hundred times more. These verses have nothing to do with money, period. This preacher's interpretation is the product of the American gospel of riches and materialism. The real meaning of these verses lies in the context of leaving all to follow Jesus.

I was a missionary for many years and left houses, family and lands to follow Jesus. I'm not 100 times richer now than I was then. What I have received is that I've gained at least 100 more brothers, sisters, mothers and children. I've lived and slept in 100 more houses than the one I left to follow Jesus. I've been to and visited many more lands than I left. And I've received some persecution with it all. Notice in the preacher's careless interpretation of this text that nothing is mentioned about receiving persecutions. No one wants to claim that part.

The Bible teaches us that a desire to be rich is dangerous: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in ruin and destruction" (1 Tim. 6:9). Unless money is indeed your servant, and you are a nonprofit bond-slave of Jesus Christ, it will ruin you.

And Then

Now here are some quotes from men of old who have gone on to their reward. Notice how careful they were about their attitude toward money.

"I continually find it necessary to guard against the natural love of wealth and grandeur which prompts us always, when we come to apply our general doctrine to our own case, to claim an exception." –William Wilberforce

"When I have money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart." –John Wesley

"Nothing that is God's is obtainable by money." –Tertian

"Shun as you would the plague a cleric who from being poor has become wealthy, or who, from being nobody has become a celebrity." –St. Jerome

"You have reached the pinnacle of success as soon as you

become uninterested in money, compliments, or publicity.”

—Thomas Wolfe

Quite a contrast between those two schools of thoughts on money.

Let's understand that money in itself is not evil. The Bible says it is the love of money that is the root of all evil (see 1 Tim. 6:10). Money makes a good servant but a lousy master. The balance is that we must become bond-slaves when it comes to the use of money, stewarding it for the Master's use.

God has given many believers power to get wealth so they may establish His covenant on the earth. But we must become nonprofit servants of God. We must not use money to heap up riches for ourselves, lest greed and covetousness enter in and spoil our spiritual lives.

Money is a deity in the church today, a major stumbling block and a main reason for the church's lack of power. Many of the Lord's ministers have become money-minded and lost the anointing.

Beware of covetousness, and guard your heart against the love of appearance. {eoa}