

03-04-12

Series: God's Economy

God's Economy (3)

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Matthew 6:19-24

(Continuation from 02-26-12)

The Doctrine of God's Economy

False doctrine leads to false standards, false behavior, and false values, and hypocritical religion seems always to be accompanied by greed and immorality (cf. [2 Peter 2:1-3, 14-15](#)).

Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli the high priest, had no regard for the things of God, but they eagerly took advantage of their father's exalted office as well as their own priestly positions. They **“were worthless men; they did not know the Lord”** ([1 Samuel 2:12](#)). They took more than their prescribed share of the sacrificial meat for themselves, and they committed adultery **“with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting”** ([1 Samuel 2:13-17, 22](#)).

Annas and Caiaphas, who were high priests during Jesus' ministry, became extremely wealthy from the many concessions they ran or licensed in the Temple. It was of those concessions that Jesus twice cleansed His Father's house ([John 2:14-16](#); [Matthew 21:12-13](#)).

Throughout the history of the church to the present day, religious charlatans have used the ministry as a means to garner wealth and to provide opportunity to indulge their sexual lusts. Often such people, like the scribes and Pharisees, have used their material prosperity as imagined evidence of their spirituality, proclaiming without shame that they are materially blessed because they are spiritually superior. They turn upside down teachings such as those in [Deuteronomy 28:1-14](#).

Those blessings are clearly and repeatedly contingent on obedience to the Lord. Material or other earthly benefits that are accumulated by greed, dishonesty, deceit, or in any other immoral way are not to be conceived of as blessings from the Lord. To claim God's approval simply on the basis of one's wealth, health, prestige, or any other such thing is to pervert His Word and use His name in vain. The Old Testament gives many warnings against accumulating wealth for its own sake. ([Proverbs 23:4](#))

Economic problems such as inflation, recessions, and depressions involve many complex factors—monetary, political, military, social, climatic, and so on. But with the exception of the climatic, over which men have little control, the root cause behind most economic difficulty is greed. The problems are brought about in the first place because of greed, and they are often seemingly impossible to solve for the same reason.

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As **John Stott** observes, “**Worldly ambition has a strong fascination for us. The spell of materialism is very hard to break**” (*Christian Counter-Culture* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1978], p. 154).

Paul established the proper attitude when he said that “**godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content**” ([1 Timothy 6:6-8](#)).