

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS INTRODUCTION

THE MINISTRY AND ITS FINANCIAL INTEGRITY, [2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15](#)

The Biblical View of Money

Now we are approaching, I admit, in a running fashion, [2 Corinthians 8](#) and [9](#), and I'm not ready to get there yet and deal with the text itself. It is a text about giving, about Christian giving. In fact, both chapters are just loaded with matters regarding giving. But before we get into those two chapters in our ongoing study of [2 Corinthians](#), it's really imperative that we have somewhat of a foundation and that foundation includes understanding what the Bible teaches about money. And most particularly for this time, at least by way of an introduction, I want to look at the things that Jesus Christ Himself said about money.

It might surprise you to know that Jesus said more about money than anybody else in the Bible, and He said more about money than any other single subject. Money is an index to a person's character. It is a measure. It is a manifestation of the heart. And I cannot fully survey everything that Jesus said about money obviously, but, briefly, I'd like to put you in touch with the most important things that He said which help us to understand the importance of money and how it is that index, or that measure of our character, of our spiritual life. We are, as I said, going to hopefully build a house with the principles of Christian giving, but we need a foundation. And the foundation includes these blocks of understanding money and what the Bible has to say about it.

Now Jesus linked money to one spiritual condition. He did it repeatedly. For example, every Sunday-school child knows about a man named Zacchaeus, a short little man, a Jew who confronted Jesus in a most unusual way, up in a tree, watching Jesus go by out of curiosity. And, of course, you remember that Jesus invited himself to his house. The story's in [Luke 19](#). And when Jesus confronted his sin and addressed his spiritual need, the man believed, the man embraced the truth about Christ and it was a marvelous, marvelous day.

[Luke 19:1-10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ "He entered Jericho and was passing through.

² And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.

³ Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.

⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

⁵ When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

⁶ And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.

⁷ When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

⁸ Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.”

¹⁰ “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

When Zacchaeus had come to faith in Jesus Christ and when he understood his life and turned to repent of his sin and embrace the Savior, immediately after that he said he would give half his money to the poor. It was an immediate response. And then he said he would pay back four times over those he had cheated.

That was instantaneous upon his confession of faith in Christ and repentance, that is to say his salvation. **Immediately the first impact was financial.** And Jesus didn’t say to him, “Hey, that’s a great idea, that’s a wonderful thing to do.” Jesus said this, “**Today salvation has come to this house.**” That’s an amazing statement.

Luke 19:9 (NASB)

⁹ “And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.”

The evidence of the transformation was the man’s attitude toward his money.

And, believe me, it was a diametrically opposite attitude then he had had up to that point. Because up to that point all he wanted to do was accumulate money to the point of extortion and robbery and withhold that money from people in need rather than give it.

And in that moment of marvelous conversion, his heart was so dramatically changed, he wanted to give his money to the poor and restore everything he had taken fourfold. **Jesus then judged the reality of the man’s salvation on his willingness, on his cheerful eagerness to part with his money for the glory of God and for the help of others.**

Now there is sort of a flip side to the Zacchaeus story, and that’s the story of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler, you remember the story is told in **Matthew 19** and **Luke 18**, came to Jesus.

Luke 18:18-27 (NASB)

¹⁸ “A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”

²⁰ “You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

- ²¹ And he said, “All these things I have kept from *my* youth.”
- ²² When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
- ²³ But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.
- ²⁴ And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”
- ²⁵ “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”
- ²⁶ They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”
- ²⁷ But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

Matthew 19:16-22 (NASB)

- ¹⁶ “And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”
- ¹⁷ And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”
- ¹⁸ *Then* he said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS;
- ¹⁹ HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”
- ²⁰ The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?”
- ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
- ²² But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.”

He was devout, he was Jewish, he was a ruler of the synagogue. He was a typical urban professional, young, hardworking, decent, earnest, and he wanted to know about how to get eternal life. And, quite amazingly, the Lord delivered to him the bottom line, In [Luke 18:22 \(NASB\)](#) He said, “When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

In [Matthew 19:21 \(NASB\)](#) He said, “Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” And you remember, the young man went away sad. Sad, really sad because he had to turn away from eternal life to hold on to his money.

In the case of Zacchaeus, money was an **evidence of transformation and true repentance**. In the case of the rich young ruler, what he felt about his money was **evidence of a hard heart**. And then Jesus said something to the disciples that was quite shocking to them. He said to them that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, which, of course, is impossible, than for a rich man to get into heaven while holding on or trusting in his riches. Wealth presents a formidable barrier to spiritual birth because money can be God, as it was for the young man.

Now Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler were not isolated incidents in the gospel narrative, not at all. In fact, you can go even back before the ministry of our Lord fully unfolds to John the Baptist, and you find that John the Baptist had the very same perspective that Jesus did. In fact, in Luke chapter 3, it's very interesting. John the Baptist, of course, is preaching repentance and the coming of the King and the kingdom. And they ask him, **“What do we do to manifest the fruit of repentance? How can we demonstrate that our repentance is real?”**

Luke 3:1-8 (NASB)

- ¹ **“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,**
- ² **in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.**
- ³ **And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;**
- ⁴ **as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.**
- ⁵ **‘EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;**
- ⁶ **AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.’”**
- ⁷ **So he *began* saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”**
- ⁸ **“Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.”**

Now remember, John the Baptist was always saying, **“Bring forth fruit unto repentance” (v.8)**. In other words, demonstrate your repentance. And so they said to him, **“What do we do to manifest the fruit of repentance?”** You know what he told them in Luke 3? First he said, “Share your clothes and your food with the poor. That will demonstrate a transformed heart.”

Luke 3:10-14 (NASB)

¹⁰ “And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what shall we do?”

¹¹ And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”

¹² And *some* tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”

¹⁴ *Some* soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And *what about us*, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages.”

Then he talked to the tax collectors, and he told the tax collectors not to collect and pocket extra money. And then he talked to the soldiers and he said to the soldiers, “Don’t extort money.” And soldiers could do that. They went around packing weapons, pretty easy for them to take money from people. And he told the soldiers not only not to extort money but to be content with their wages.

So, there he had the general people, the population, he told them to give away their clothes and their food. He had the tax collectors, he told them not to take extra money. He had the soldiers and he told them don’t extort money and be content with your wages. **And in all three cases, that was John the Baptist’s definition of the fruit of repentance. How interesting, how fascinating that the fruit of repentance had so much to do with how you view and handle money and possessions.** It’s really quite amazing.