

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS INTRODUCTION

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

The Biblical View of Money

Now we come to our time in the Word of God, continuing our series on a scriptural understanding of money. And I want you to listen to me very carefully at this juncture of our study, I'm going to say some things that perhaps you have not heard. You're going to need to process them a little bit in your mind. I'm not going to have the time to deal with every possible caveat or exception or issue that what I say might raise, but we will deal with those as time goes on. But I want to lay a foundation, this morning, that is very important for understanding this issue of money.

Now, last week...we started kind of a preliminary discussion of money, two weeks ago, in anticipation of studying [2 Corinthians 8](#) and [9](#). And [2 Corinthians 8](#) and [9](#), as I said, is about giving, it's about Christian giving, how we give our money. And before we can understand giving, **we have to understand some other aspects** of money and wealth and possessions.

And so we talked about **the morality of money**, that is that money is neutral but it does demonstrate our morality or our spirituality. It is an index on character. I made the statement that I could look at your checkbook and tell where your priorities in life are and the emphasis of your life. And that's pretty much true. Money does manifest our character and our loves and likes and priorities.

Then we also talked about that issue **of loving money**. How important it is not to love money. God has provided resource for us. We are not to turn money into an idolatrous object, but we are to treat it the way God would have it be treated and not in His place, not substituting our money for Him, not trusting it instead of Him.

And then last time I said, **thirdly**, "We want to consider the issue of acquiring money, the morality of money, the love of money, and **the acquisition of money**." And I told you, last time, that there are some negatives with regard to acquiring money. **First** of all, we are not to steal it. Scripture is very strong about that. **Secondly**, we are not to exploit others to gain it. **Thirdly**, we are not to defraud others by withholding it and thus maintaining our own richness. **Fourthly**, we are not to gamble for it. So, we don't steal it, exploit others to gain it, defraud people of it, or gamble for it.

Now, that brings us to the positive matter of how we acquire money. How does Scripture indicate that we are to acquire money or possessions or wealth? And as I was asking that question this week and endeavoring to answer it, another question interrupted

my thinking, which happens to me a lot. And the question is this. **Does God really want us to acquire it at all?**

Reading, as I have, a number of books which advocate that Christians should live at a bare subsistent level, take a sort of semi-vow of poverty, have nothing more than bare necessities, I realized that I probably needed to address that issue. There are lots of books, and there have been through the history of the church.

There have been lots of folks, lots of people, even certain orders within the framework of the church that have taken the idea that the Bible indicates we should really have nothing more than our absolute bare necessities. We should live at that level, avoiding all comfort and all luxury, and that that's really God's highest calling. That's what God wants for us is just that. God really wants us not to be totally poor, because he'll provide the basic things of life, but not much beyond that.

Is that actually accurate? Is that God's purpose? Is that God's design? If you have any comforts, any luxuries, anything that you really don't need to eat and sleep and survive and shelter yourself, is it a sinful thing? Or does God want us to have a certain measure of wealth? That's a very important question. And before we talk about how we acquire it, we have to talk about if God wants us to acquire it. And we have to answer that question. As I think about answering that question, it's a marvelous, marvelous thing...as it begins to unfold...that indeed God does, and God has provided for us to gain various measures of wealth.

To understand this, we need to go back to [Genesis chapter 1](#). So open your Bible to the first chapter in the Bible, [Genesis chapter 1](#), and just kind of stay there for a moment while I make a few comments and then read you some verses out of this chapter. Now let's listen carefully to what I'm going to say because all of this is going to begin to accumulate and develop into something that is important for us to understand. God has created a material world. That is, God has created a natural world. It is purely physical, purely physical, and temporary. It is a perishing earth. It is a perishing world.

As I have told you before, we live on a disposable planet. It is not to be perpetuated forever. It is to be used up, and then it will go out of existence. Jesus said, **"Heaven and earth shall what?" "Pass away."**

Matthew 5:18 (NASB)

¹⁸"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Matthew 24:35 (NASB)

³⁵"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

Mark 13:31 (NASB)

³¹"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

Luke 16:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.”

Luke 21:33 (NASB)

³³“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”

This is not an eternal earth. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. This is a very temporary planet.

In fact, I think both an understanding of Scripture and a proper understanding of science would put the age of this universe somewhere around 15,000 years ago and that's all. This is not a millions and millions of years-old universe or earth; it is a relatively young planet and it is designed by God in the midst of eternity for a very, very brief purpose.

It is designed to be the habitat for humanity for a few thousand years, and, really, that's it. It is disposable. It is soulless. The whole creation is soulless. It has no eternal soul. It has no lasting purpose or value. It is simply for temporary use. It will be extinct in the near future and when you see the descriptions of heaven, there are no animals there, there are no flowers there, there's no grass there and so forth.

And you can see a very great difference, although there are some metaphoric uses of minerals and water and rivers and the tree of life and those things, they have a heavenly and eternal character and could not be in any sense the same as what we experience here in this created world. So we live in a world for all intents and purposes which is going out of existence, is disposable, and was designed by God for man to use. That's very, very important to understand. It contains no eternal qualities. And what that means is, it has nothing of heavenly value. Did you hear that? It has nothing of heavenly value, nothing.

Now, the conclusion that I make, after understanding all of that, is that God has designed all of this for a very brief purpose to enrich the life of man. I mean, after all, He could have...he could have put us all on the moon which has no color, no nothing. In fact, when we go up there and walk around, we come back and say there's nothing there we need. There's nothing there that could support life, sustain life, let alone make life enjoyable. There's nothing outside of this earth that we need; there's everything here that we can use.

And when we fly around in space and do all the exploration, we really never find anything that changes our life here. All we do is just get up there and spy on each other and send down telephone signals and TV pictures, and all of that. I mean, there's nothing out there that you can find that will add, in any sense, to the profound richness of life on this planet. And God never intended it be eternal. It wasn't eternal. He created it, and it won't be eternal. He'll uncreate it. It was created to house the humanity that He created

for eternal purposes, but it is not an eternal world. So whatever you have in this world is just temporary and it burns up.

Now, having said all of that, let me go further and say when God created the earth He made a great distinction. There's a great big thick line, if you will, between man and all the rest of the creation. All the creation is soulless, temporal, dying, and passing. Man is eternal. Okay? Man is eternal. A great distinction between the whole creation, all the creatures and all the components and elements of the earth, animate and inanimate, and man. Man was made in the very image of God. And He gave man dominion and supremacy and sovereignty over everything in this temporary, temporal, physical, soulless creation.

Man is superior in design. He is superior in responsibility, capability, authority, and value and man will live forever. He is an eternal being. The earth and all it contains then is to provide for man richness of life. And it really fits into the category of common grace. Whether a man is regenerate or not regenerate, whether he loves God or doesn't love God, whether he obeys God or doesn't obey God, his very life is filled with the richness of this creation. And that is just the character of God to be so kind and to spread His common grace to man.

Now, having said that, look at [verse 27](#) of [Genesis chapter 1](#).

[Genesis 1:27 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁷“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Down in [chapter 2 verse 7](#), it says,

[Genesis 2:7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

That sets him apart from everything else. But in [chapter 1 verse 27](#),

[Genesis 1:27 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁷“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

And God blessed them and said to them,

[Genesis 1:28-30 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸“God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to

every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so."

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," and here's the key, **"and subdue it."**

A very important command. Harness its power. Harness its resources. Extract its riches. That's what it's saying.

As **John Schneider** writes, "It is here to be exploited, studied, cultivated, tamed, used, and enjoyed." That's what God is saying. Draw out of it all the richness that's in it. The whole creation is for man to use and for man to enjoy and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth. You're in charge of all of it. You have sovereignty over all of it. You harness all of its power and all of its beauty and all of its richness and all of its capabilities, all of its energies, all of its productivity.

Verse 29, God said,

Genesis 1:29-31 (NASB)

²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so."

³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Very good. There's nothing like it in the universe.

We fly around, we see nothing like this planet, nothing with the incredible natural resources of this earth. And we then have to assume that there is a righteous use of the material world. There is a righteous use of material wealth. We live in a material world, and it pleases God that it is as rich as it is. It pleases God for us to use it as a gift from Him in the category of common grace, grace common to all of us. We are to live richly, enjoyably, comfortably, and we should be thankful to Him in the midst of all of this. God has made a very good world for us.

And He knew it would only be very temporary. He knew it would all burn up. And He knew that it wouldn't have anything that was eternal in it, and yet He gave it to us just for the sheer brief joy and richness of it. God Himself then affirms the goodness of all creation as a gift to make man's life enjoyable. I mean, when you think about it, it's pretty staggering. The beauty of nature, the absolute breathtaking beauty of nature is for our enjoyment. To go and visit places and see that magnificent beauty is part of God's good gift to man.

The variety of foods, I mean, it's just incredible. Every plant, every kind of animal, every kind of taste, and then God accommodated all of that by giving us the ability to

taste. God could have created us with no taste buds and we would have eaten porridge three meals a day for all our life. But that's not God. God is a God of infinite variety, infinite beauty, and God has created a world for us to enjoy. The endless joys of what we eat, the endless joys of what we see, the smell of things, the myriad of fragrances that fill the world have no lasting value. They are purely for this life. God has given us such a rich life to enjoy.

Why does He do that? Because that demonstrates His loving generous, almost lavish character; **because that should engender in us a response of thanksgiving and praise and glory to Him and should cause us to be obedient to One who is so generous, and because it should stimulate in us a foretaste of heaven.** Whatever the wonders and joys and comforts and beauties of this life are, they are but a small taste of the glories and beauties and comforts and joys of the life to come.

God has His purposes in putting us in a rich, rich, rich environment; the endless productivity of this earth, the endless seeds and plants and foods, the incredible mineral wealth that comes out of the ground, the gold, the silver, all of the other metals that create all of the things that make life enjoyable and comfortable, the tremendous deposit of oil that creates the plastics and all the things that we extract out of that. All the wonderful little goodies and gadgets and all the comfortable things that we enjoy, all the fabrics that can be woven out of cotton and the little silk worm.

Why did God make a silkworm spin silk if He didn't expect somebody to wear a silk dress? The whole point is God has created a world just loaded with richness and beauty and color. I mean, I look out over this congregation this evening and I see a whole lot of drab men and a lot of colorful ladies, and I know that...I know God has made all that color. He didn't have to make color in the world, but He did. And the beauty of a lovely dress and the wonderful color even in a red tie, occasionally, pleases the Lord because He made the colors, right?

There's nothing wrong with enjoying the comfort of a warm bed and sitting by a warm fireplace in a comfortable chair and, in the warm light of the fireplace, reading a good book and listening to beautiful music played on instruments. That's the richness of all that God has put into this earth. It's all there and comparing...or rather combining the richness of the earth with the ability of mankind to extract that richness, you have the fulfillment of God's purpose for men to enjoy their life.

And that's how God made the world and that's His purpose. All these riches, we just keep tapping them and tapping them and it almost seems like there is no end to them. Immense natural resources and human capability that is able to extract those resources in so many, many different ways. It's just incredible.

So, God gives a rousing affirmation of the goodness of this disposable planet. It's just for now, but He says enjoy it while it lasts, enjoy it while it lasts. It's kind of like life, you know. God only gives you your children for now, really, and you enjoy them while they last and they all realize that someday you'll die or they'll die and life is short, but

there's so much richness in this life. God is just a God who wants us to enjoy even this life.

Now the Fall came along. Adam and Eve sinned and the curse fell on the earth. It marred its goodness. It didn't destroy it. It didn't negate it. In fact, He created man with a freedom. You know, I mean, He just literally turned Adam and Eve loose in Eden and said, "Have at it. You've got the run of the place, the run of the Garden of Eden." And when they sinned, that freedom became potentially damaging.

The freedom is still there, but, sadly, man can now take the resource of the earth and turn them into war machines. He can now take the good gifts of physical love and turn it into sexual perversion. He can take the production of plants and turn them into poisons and drugs and destroy people's lives with them. There is risk in the freedom now. But the earth is still good, it's still very good.

You see, the sin is not in enjoying it. The sin is in overindulgence. The sin is in flaunting your wealth. The sin is in self-centered, self-indulgent, begrudging, compassionless consumption. It's the attitude of the heart that is the sin. **If you enjoy the richness of what God has provided and you give Him thanks, and that thanks turns into obedience, and you're willing to be generous with others, then you've made the righteous use of the material world.**