

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS INTRODUCTION

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

The Biblical View of Money

God doesn't want you poor. God is happy to spread the wealth as long as you know who gave it to you, as long as you thank Him and praise Him and honor Him and glorify Him. And in the delighting and the joy of it comes obedience. And as long as you're willing to share it generously.

Verse 18,

Deuteronomy 8:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸“But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

¹⁹It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

²⁰Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.”

And again we're right back to the same principle, wealth, possessions; money becomes an index of your spiritual character, doesn't it?

If you have a right approach to it, delighting in it, thanking God for it, God is pleased. God is pleased. What a wonderful world He's given us. And even those of us who are perhaps on the bottom end as opposed to the top end of wealth are the beneficiaries of the tremendous richness of the earth.

We might not have as much as the wealthy. We may not be as capable mentally and intellectually. We can't invent things. We can't all build great corporations. We aren't all educational geniuses. We aren't all great scientists who can invent things. We aren't great engineers who can invent a cotton gin or whatever. We can't create the imaginations that cause all the great products that we enjoy.

We don't know how to dig into the earth and bring up stuff and how to create the things. But we enjoy them. We enjoy the beauty of them, and we enjoy, to some degree, the comfort of them. And, beloved, let me tell you, that is the genius of a free enterprise approach to life which I believe is God's intended approach. He hasn't made us all equal. He's made us all unique. And some of His marvelous human creations have had the capacities to do those kinds of things that cause all of us to be enriched, all of us.

Whether it's musical genius, whether it's electronic genius, whether it's engineering genius, whether it's corporate genius, whether it's an invention of this or that, in some ways we can all benefit from those rich things. And why begrudge the rich who have more than we have that's ever so brief anyway? And its God's gracious way of saying to mankind, "I want you to enjoy the richness of life." We'll all have our true riches in eternity to come. But if we have them here, to whatever degree we have them, and we thank God for them, and we delight in them, and see them as good gifts from Him, He's pleased. It's the heart attitude that is the issue.

To demonstrate that even further, turn over the prophet Amos, [Amos chapter 5](#). This is quite an interesting prophecy. You might want to spend a little more time studying it. But in [Amos chapter 5](#), I want to take you down to [verse 11](#). The prophet is predicting the day of the Lord, the coming judgment of God.

He's predicting that judgment to come on the nations surrounding Israel and even on Israel. And down in [chapter 5, verse 11](#), we get a very important component in their conduct that created this situation of imminent judgment. "Because you impose heavy rent on the poor and exact a tribute of grain from them."

Amos 5:11 (NASB)

¹¹ "Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine."

In other words, instead of being generous and kind and gracious and sharing, sacrificially, with those in need, instead of giving, they had done the opposite, they had imposed heavy rent on the poor, making themselves far more rich than they needed to be, and the poor poorer than they needed to be, and they exacted from them a tribute of grain. They put a tax on them, imposed a tax on them, an arbitrary tax and took even more of their food away. Then further in [verse 11](#), "**Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, yet you will not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.**"

Nothing wrong with a stone home, nothing wrong with a vineyard. But [verse 12](#),

Amos 5:12 (NASB)

¹² "For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, You who distress the righteous and accept bribes And turn aside the poor in the gate."

That is always the issue. God doesn't begrudge you the beauty of the home. God designed symmetry. God is behind architecture.

God is behind textures and all the fine and beautiful and magnificent things that make up the forms of beauty in which we live and which we enjoy. It's not that. It's how you handle it and how you feel about it and your attitude toward it. If it is one of

thanksgiving and praise and delight and joy in God's goodness and provision, and one of generosity, then God is pleased.

Now go back to [chapter 3](#). This is very strong language, [chapter 3](#) of [Amos](#). [Verse 14](#) talks about punishment and [verse 15](#) then gets specific, "I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house."

Amos 3:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴**"For on the day that I punish Israel's transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off And they will fall to the ground.**

¹⁵**I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; **The houses of ivory** will also perish And the great houses will come to an end," Declares the LORD."**

Now, some of you have two houses. You have a winter house and a summerhouse. Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with having a, you know, a summerhouse at the beach or a winter house in the mountains, and that's not a problem. God assumes that that is a reality for many folks, and it is across the world.

Even interestingly enough in my last visit to Romania, there are summerhouses that even those people systematically and kind of patiently build through the years to get them out of the busyness of the city during the summer. That's not a problem. People have winter houses and summerhouses.

And here's another little twist on a house, "**The houses of ivory.**" Now I've never seen an ivory house, most of my life I've been told that you shouldn't be taking that ivory. Elephants are eternal and we don't want to be messing with them. But in ancient times, I guess, they didn't feel that way, and they actually had houses of ivory. It doesn't mean the house was made out of ivory; it just means it had ivory in it.

Maybe they had ivory pillars or carvings. Nothing wrong with that. I mean, that's a magnificent beautiful thing. I'm sure craftsmen took the ivory and carved with the genius that only mankind can bring. You never saw a tusk carved by an elephant. It has to be a man to do that or a woman. And they put that beauty in the house.

And then some people had great houses. Some people, I can imagine, had a 6000, 8000, 10,000, who knows what, square-foot house, had summerhouses, winter houses, houses with rich accoutrements, great houses. I'm going to just smash them all. Why? Why? Not because you possess the house.

[Chapter 4, verse 1](#), this is interesting, "**Hear this word, you cows of Bashan.**" Now that's pretty strong language to refer to the women, but that is exactly what the prophet is doing.

Amos 4:1 (NASB)

¹**"Hear this word, you **cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of****

Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"

This would be politically incorrect. But Amos calls the women **"Cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria."** And here is the indictment, **"Who oppress,"** by the way, it's the women who are behind all these fancy houses; I mean, men, you know, they don't really get into that too much. And so the women, at least in those ancient times, are the ones who were into these things, and I think that's somewhat typical. A woman has a touch for the beauty and all of that, whereas the men tend to be a bit more functional. But these women had gotten carried away, not so much in their houses as having turned their hearts against the poor.

He says they oppress the poor, they crush the needy. And by the way, they were in charge of their husbands, **"Who say to your husbands, 'Bring now that we may drink.'"** Charlie, we're ready to be served. I mean, they're running the show. They're building the houses. They're doing their thing. And these cows of Bashan oppress the poor, crush the needy. That's the issue. That is the issue.

Amos 4:2 (NASB)

²"The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness, "Behold, the days are coming upon you When they will take you away with meat hooks," And the last of you with fish hooks."

The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, **"Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks,"** that's what you use for a cow, meat hooks. **"And the last of you with fish hooks."** And you'll go out through breaches in the walls."

Amos 4:3 (NASB)

³"You will go out *through breaches in the walls*, Each one straight before her, And you will be cast to Harmon," declares the LORD."

In other words, your houses are going to get smashed. Judgment. The judgment is because of the calculated willful oppression of the poor, not because of what they had but because of what they wouldn't do for the poor because their heart attitude was so desperately wrong.

Go to [chapter 6](#) of [Amos](#). [Chapter 6](#) in [verse 4](#). Now we'll go inside and get a little further definition of the ivory houses.

Amos 6:4 (NASB)

⁴"Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall."

[Verse 4](#), **"Those who recline on beds of ivory."** Pretty nice digs. **"And sprawl on their couches and eat lambs from the flock."** Lamb, the best of sheep meat. **"And calves, veal, in the midst of the stall."**

So I mean the best food, the best couches, the best beds. And not only that, they have ancient Hebrew stereo systems, **“Who improvise to the sound of the harp.”**

Amos 6:5 (NASB)

⁵“Who improvise to the sound of the harp, *And* like David have composed songs for themselves.”

And they even have private musicians who compose songs for them, and who drink wine from sacrificial bowls while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils. I mean, they got the whole deal...they got the deal, the makeup, the oils, the whole nine yards. I mean, they're just really wealthy, they're living the life.

And here's the indictment, the end of [verse 6](#), “Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.”

Amos 6:6 (NASB)

⁶“Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, **Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.”**

See, that's the indictment. God is not indicting them for the sweet-smelling oil. Why the woman, right, in Song of Solomon was anointed with that and that was a wonderful thing. I mean fragrances, God made those and oils and soothing creams and all the fine beds and nice couches and good meat and beautiful music and everything. But you haven't grieved over the fact that the rest of the people are in a disastrous situation and you have no compassion. That's the issue. **You have no compassion.**

Amos 6:7 (NASB)

⁷“Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.**”**

“Therefore they'll go now into exile at the head of the exiles.” When the captivity comes and the exile goes, these cows are going right out in front into exile. **“And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.”** No more lying around having your fancy banquets. Nothing wrong with a banquet. Hey, how many parables did Jesus tell and in the parable He talked about a feast? Nothing wrong with that.

I mean, I think if your heart is right you can take your wife out on that special evening when you go to someplace and eat that special kind of food with all the wonderful tastes that are available in God's creation, if your heart is right and filled with thanksgiving and if you're willing to share and you're generous, that's part of the richness of what God has provided in this little brief period of time in which we live in this world and we get a glimpse of the kindness and the tenderness and the compassion and the generosity of God toward us which is a foretaste of heaven.

You know, righteousness...righteousness is not a...it is not a matter of scraping away luxuries endlessly until you reach the core of necessities at the bottom. To such scraping there could be no end, I suppose. Righteousness is how you feel about it and how you

feel toward God about it. You don't worship it, you thank Him for it, and how you feel about others you would share it generously, generously.

And, obviously, as I said last time, you don't have to have a \$250,000.00 lifestyle because you have a \$250,000.00. You want to be careful not to offend others, right? [Romans 14](#) and [15](#), you want to be sensitive to that within reason. But you also, at the same time, want to thank God for the richness of what He's given you in this brief temporal life that you lived in.

We are not called into poverty. I hear sometimes people say, "Well, you know, Jesus was...Jesus was absolutely poor." In fact, I've seen writers that said, "Jesus was homeless. You know, He grew up with the absolute poor and was homeless." Well, that's not right. Jesus stayed with His friends. That's different.

But you need to understand something else. Jesus was not raised in poverty. When God incarnate came into the world He didn't come into a poor family. Okay? That's very important to remember. The strata of social economic life in Israel, Palestine, would be something like this. On the bottom were the poor and Jesus said you'll always have them with you.

Why? Because they have limitations. Sometimes they have physical limitations, sometimes they have mental limitations, sometimes they have circumstantial limitations because of where they are, but they're always going to be there. **I don't know if you realize it, but the average IQ is under 100. That's part of God's design. It's part of the effect of sin.**

But there are always going to be people who aren't able to produce high, aren't able to generate all kinds of things, and are not going to be able to live the kind of life that certain other people are going to live. Those people must be the object of our love, our affection, our care and our generosity at all times so they, too, can enjoy the richness and the comforts of life. And God is pleased when we do that. But they're always going to be there.

Then there was, as there always is, generally, there was an upper end of wealthy people. They were the landowners and they were the rulers and they were the people who were in power and authority. But in the middle was a rather significant middle class, usually defined by students of Scripture as craftsmen. They were the farmers and they were the toolmakers and instrument makers and they were the artisans. They made the pottery and they were the ones who were the builders. And that's the family that Jesus was born into.

He was born into a middle-class family. His father was a...was a construction worker. His father was a builder; he had his own construction business. We usually translate it carpenter, but the actual Greek word is builder. It can be used for a brick mason, or one who uses wood. Joseph was a builder. He had his own business. He was his own business owner. He had a number of children after Jesus. You remember, quite

a number and, certainly, must have made a living well enough to support them. They lived in a town called Nazareth. They were not in poverty. Jesus had a home and they had a place there to operate his business.

And historians tell us around that time that construction was flourishing in that part of the world due to the Roman expansion. And because that part, particularly Galilee, known as Galilee of the Gentiles, had an influx of Gentile people because it was a trade route, east and west, and north and south, and it was flourishing, building. And it's very likely that Joseph would have been an excellent carpenter and we know His Son Jesus would have been the best who ever was. And no doubt they had built a successful business and may have been very active.

And, in fact, when Joseph died, Jesus as the firstborn son would have inherited the family business. So He didn't come into the world as a poor, homeless individual. It was when He began His itinerant ministry and moved away from His home and began to travel and spend His whole life traveling and ministering, that at that point He had to depend upon the love and care of others for His place to stay and for His resources. Very little different, I would say, then a missionary or a traveling evangelist throughout the history of the church as dependent on the food and the shelter of families who cared about His ministry, not to conclude that He was absolutely poverty stricken.

So it's wrong to assume that about Jesus. He came in at a level of moderation, but certainly at a level where His little family enjoyed some of the comforts of life in that time. And certainly the Galilee provides some lovely, lovely accoutrements to life. Those of you who have been there would know that. Tremendous food resources there, beautiful scenery there, great water supply and all kinds of riches provided in that place. And that's the kind of environment our Lord came into. And I think there's a certain testimony to the intention of God in putting Christ in that...that middle ground where He could speak wisely and thoughtfully to the wealthy and where He could also comfort the poor because He was close to both.

We're not called to poverty. We are called to tap all of the great resources of this rich earth, to delight in all that it yields and to give God all the praise and all the glory and all the thanks, and to make sure that our hearts are right toward Him. And we never love the riches, we never flaunt the riches, we're never proud about them, but we enjoy them and we express our gratitude to Him for all the delight they bring to our hearts. At the same time, we are eager and anxious to make sure that those around us who on their own can't have those joys can receive them at our hand because we are willing to share.

So, enough of that. If we had time this morning...and we don't...we could read through [Proverbs](#). There is a myriad of things in [Proverbs](#) that talk about wealth, and not necessarily in an evil sense at all. In fact, it says that you're going to be poor if you're not willing to work, or if you're lazy. But if you work hard and if you're industrious, you're going to attain wealth. That's not wrong. Material gain is a part of God's design for those who are diligent and who take advantage of their opportunities.

Now, all of that simply to answer the question...**Do we have a right to acquire wealth?**

Answer: God has just filled this planet with wealth and there's nobody to acquire it but us. It's temporary. It's going to go away. It has no lasting value. It is here for our sheer enjoyment, so enjoy it, enjoy it with the right heart attitude. That's all God asks, toward Him, toward yourself and toward those who don't have what you have.

Now all of that leads us to how do we get this wealth. We have a right to it. How do we get it? Let me give you two quick responses to that. **One, through gifts.** That's a biblical way. The Bible says we can receive an inheritance or gifts.

In fact, it's better to give than receive.

Acts 20:35 (NASB)

³⁵ "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, '**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**'"

Philippians 4. Paul says he received gifts from the Philippians for his ministry for which he was extremely grateful. He was, as we shall see, collecting money from the saints in the Gentile world to take back to the poor saints, to give as a gift to the saints in Jerusalem.

Philippians 4:15-20 (NASB)

¹⁵ "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."

It's perfectly legitimate. If your old aunt dies and leaves you an inheritance, that's a very legitimate way to get money. If somebody gives you a gift, somebody is kind enough to give you something, that is a wonderful way for you to acquire treasures.

Please listen to this testimony of one of my fellow professors who has truly learned how to receive.

"My house is full of treasures; I confess to you. And one of the things that people give me is pictures. I don't hang all of them, but some of them I hang. Some of them are magnificent.

Some artist who paints some of the most beautiful paintings in our country, some well-known are thankful for our ministry and they give me their pictures, and we hang them in our home and the beauty of those is wonderful. The people in Canada, on the last night after I preached said, “We want you not to forget our love to you,” and so they pulled this drape back and they gave me a beautiful picture to take home to my family as a reminder.

I have a magnificent seascape in my house painted by one of the most outstanding seascape artists. I don't know how much this oil painting is worth. But he said to me one day, “Your ministry has touched my life, stop by my gallery, pick whatever you want and take it home. It's my love gift to you.” Now I could say, “Oh I don't want to take it, I don't want to take it, I'm humbly going to turn you down.” It's more blessed for him to give than receive and I want to give him that blessing, and it's enriched my home and made me grateful to God for the ministry in his life. Those are gifts, we all understand that. That's part of what God has designed to enrich us.”