

The Law of Spiritual Riches

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/law-spiritual-riches/>

Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth (mammon), who will entrust the true riches to you?

Luke 16:11

The law of spiritual riches is a non-negotiable principle of the kingdom of God.

There is an unbreakable connection between our relationship to money and the release of the Spirit. If we have not been faithful in regard to natural wealth, how will God entrust to us spiritual riches?

Not about ‘stewardship’

Before we go any further, a warning. This is not about so-called ‘stewardship programs’ – your church giving, or support of a ministry.

‘Stewardship’ (giving etc) has been domesticated for too long by reducing it to fund-raising for missions or a church. This is not to deny the primary purpose of giving as the support of apostolic ministry for the spread of the gospel. However, for this to happen in such proportions to bring the fullness of the kingdom to earth the invisible and insidious control of Mammon over believers must be exposed. No attempt to raise funds for missions or ministry will achieve world-changing dimensions without the subtle power of Mammon being exposed and broken. It is one of the major principalities ruling the world and the church, blocking a world-transforming move of God. In fact, it is at the root of the church’s chronic spiritual poverty.

The meaning and significance of the word *Mammon* goes deeper into the human psyche than you may be willing to recognise. This is far more threatening than any planned giving, no matter how sincere, even if it is ten percent.

If, therefore, we are desirous of spiritual wealth; of entering the fullness of the kingdom we must understand what “*faithfulness in unrighteous wealth (mammon)*” is. Failure to recognise this law hinders true spiritual progress. Conversely, to recognise and obey it removes an invisible spiritual ceiling, resulting in an open heaven over our life.

What does it mean, therefore, to be “*faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth (mammon)*”?

Fussing in the basement of our soul

First, as just stated, we must understand that this is not primarily about good ‘stewardship’.

Rather than merely dealing with Christian finance principles, the full import of the word *Mammon* delves into the human psyche, fussing deep into the basement of our soul, our sense of *who* we are, locating from where we derive our significance and security.

To fully appreciate this we must understand the word *Mammon*. While the word is used to refer to riches or wealth, it goes deeper, with the original root meaning ‘to be firm, reliable’. *Mammon*, therefore, is something reliable upon which we depend. Thus, the workings of *Mammon* within us, rooted in self-reliance, may range from finding material and emotional sustenance in money, to status and reputation, to human systems, possessions, career success, or relationships; in fact, any created thing. Deriving life from anything less than the uncreated God is *Mammon*, and, by definition, idolatry. In essence, therefore, *Mammon* is the rule of self. This then gives ground to the spiritual principality of *Mammon*.

Consequently, when Jesus declares that we cannot serve God and *Mammon* (Mtt 6:24) he is not placing a prohibition on money or wealth; rather, he is showing the impossibility of finding sustenance from God and self (*Mammon*) simultaneously—it is

either one or the other. This brings us to the “*deceitfulness of riches*”.

Recognising the *deceitfulness of riches*

Secondly, if we are to obey the law of spiritual riches we will need to recognise the “*deceitfulness of riches*” (Mtt 13:22).

How are riches deceitful? In that we genuinely believe we are serving God when, in fact, we are not—we are unwittingly serving *Mammon*.

How does this deception occur? Through the insidious intrusion of the ‘*cares and anxieties of this life*’—the pressure of making our way in life, and the ‘*desire for other things*’, for more: the new model vehicle, better employment conditions, more influence for our ministry, greater success or the recognition of our peers. This way the seed of the kingdom is smothered (Mk 4:19). Even so, we maintain religious behaviours, believing that through these we maintain a relationship with God.

Thus, the difficulty, as Jesus underlined, for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God (Mk 10:23-25). The intrusion of anxiety and self-reliance prohibits us from authentic kingdom life—from experiencing “*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom 14:17). We are found with a form of religion, but void of inner reality.

Rather than enjoying the deep internal resonance of the Father’s love with the assurance of his covenant fidelity and providential care, we are burdened by anxiety—by the cares of this world.

However, anxiety, if recognised, then serves as a barometer, warning us of change in the spiritual atmosphere of our lives.

Dealing with *anxiety*

Thirdly, to obey the law of spiritual riches requires our dealing with anxiety.

Anxiety either drives us to the Lord or to *Mammon*. It presents us with the clear choice of either finding comfort in *Mammon* or in God. Resolve and progress in the kingdom is only found by obeying the clear injunction to not be anxious. The choice is ours, to trust in the Lord or rely on our own understanding (Pro 3:5-6).

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?...

For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25–34 NIV

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6–7 NIV

The *rub*

This is the *rub* in the law of spiritual riches.

Anxiety will either press us into the Lord, or into relying on ourselves. By leaning on our own understanding we rationalise our self-reliance, and thus, find our own life. In contrast, trusting in the Lord requires that we lose our life:

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:39 NIV

The Greek word used for “life” is *psuche*, referring to our soul life—our mind, will, and emotions. And so, to “lose our life” demands the laying down of our soul-realm—that is, what we feel, think, or want in the face of life threatening circumstances. I warned you this would fuss with you in the basement of your soul! Compared to the sanitised teaching of institutionalised religion on stewardship Jesus’ call to follow him is deeply threatening.

“If the Lord wants us in Canada he’ll sell the home at the best price possible!”

I recall vividly Jenny and me as a young married couple hearing the call of God. We had just designed and built our first home. One of our pastors at the time suggested we attend a certain Bible College in Canada, my response being far from positive in that we had done college some years before – my pride was offended – we had already been in ministry and were beyond this. However, God didn’t leave it there. On our Christmas holidays God visited me through a dream. Awakening the next morning I knew we were on the way to Canada and Bible College. This meant selling our dream home to fund the call; and so, being the spiritual giant I was I thought, “OK, if the Lord wants us in Canada he’ll sell the home at the best price possible!” So on our return home the house went immediately onto the market at a top price. After many weeks without any serious lookers and the deadline for moving to Canada looming I was reviewing the situation with my pastor when he said, “David, what price have you put on the call of God?” Instantly, I knew the figure the house was to sell for—\$67,500. Unfortunately, this was \$10,000 less than our asking price! I immediately notified the agent to lower the price and the very next day the house sold to a cash buyer. The sobering reality was that I had unwittingly put a \$10,000 value on the call of God. I had been willing to sell out for a few moth-eaten dollars!

The call of God is never convenient – it cuts across our ways and our thoughts – and so, human reasoning and pride must give way to God. I had to lay down my pride to return to Bible College—“Surely I was already a graduate with experience in ministry. How could this be God?” I was also required to lay down my natural reasoning that argued, “We are sons of the king—if this is God, the house should sell for the best price!” I could have also argued, “Selling the home is irresponsible—doesn’t the Bible say that those who don’t provide are worse than infidels?” You might also respond, “Well that’s OK for David, he has a call to ministry. God would never require me to do something like that.” Wouldn’t he? Are we not all ministers and disciples? No one is exempt from the call to follow Jesus and to sell all. Are we not also all sons of God? And so, cannot the Spirit of God lead us all? And if he leads you to some kind of radical obedience you too will enjoy the promise that any who forsake houses and lands for his sake and the gospels will receive a hundred-fold in this life, with sufferings (Mtt 19:28; Mk 10:29-30).

Breaking the strength of the natural man

The law of spiritual riches demands our soul – our *psuche* – what we want, feel, and think. It brings down pride and the false god of *Mammon* in obedience to the supremacy of God in Christ. Only as we allow God to break the strength of the natural (*psuche*) man – our soul-realm – is *Mammon* defeated; and only then are we entrusted with spiritual wealth.

Our refusal to allow this process, by ‘*toughing it out*’, renders us impervious to the Spirit and the wisdom of God—for the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). As long as we cling to our tattered garments of self-reliance we can never be clothed with the riches of God’s power and wisdom—we disqualify ourselves from receiving greater revelation of God and withhold his visitation to the earth. As long as we settle for some castrated version of “*stewardship*”, fussing as to percentages and whether its before or after income tax, instead of radically abandoning ourselves to the Lord, we deceive ourselves; we believe that we are rich and visionary while in reality we are poor and blind.

Now is the time to recognise our plight and true condition. Only the poor in spirit are given the kingdom (Mtt 5:3). It is time to humble ourselves, and in due time we will be exalted. We have traded the majesty and terror of Christ the King demanding our soul and our all for our token-giving. He is standing at the door knocking, commanding the doors to Zion be swung open. As surely as we respond the king of glory shall enter and sup with us.

And we shall arise and rule with him if we overcome.

17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 3:17–22 ESV

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