

## **LESSON 27 - FREE OF THE LOVE OF MONEY** **Is Money Bad, And Are You Free Of The Love Of Money?**

By Brian S. Holmes

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**J**esus talked more about money than any other topic in the gospels. Tell me how much of your time and energy are focused on getting and keeping money, and what you spend your money on, and I'll tell you where your heart is. We need to know: 1) money (specifically our pursuit and use of money) often represents idolatry of self, 2) money itself isn't evil, but the love of money is. Third, we must examine our own lifestyles and our heart's desires, and allow the Lord to uproot and free us from the love of money.

**1. Money Often Represents Idolatry of Self.** A love of and fixation on the accumulation of wealth and worldly possessions indicate a spiritual heart issue before God. God created us to bring Him glory; we are to worship Him alone. It's a sin called idolatry to worship any type of idol. An idol was often in the form of a statue of a false god, but it could also be *any* other thing put *above* God. *Self* idolatry is when the idol is you, living as your own god, whose life purpose is to glorify and please yourself. It is placing your desires above God's. If we spend our lives pursuing wealth to indulge in worldly pleasures, we live to worship and serve ourselves. In Luke 16:13 Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”* When the Pharisees, who loved money, heard Jesus say this, they sneered. In Luke 16:14-15 He responds, *“God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.”* If our life's ambition and heart's desire is worldly things, God sees this as detestable. This is self idolatry; it needs to be repented of.

**2. Money Isn't Evil, But The Love of Money Is.** Money is a part of life; it's just a way for people to exchange goods and services. God gives us the intellect and power to work and earn. Deuteronomy 8:18 says, *“Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant...”* Wealth is also a blessing and gift from God. 1 Samuel 2:7-8 says, *“The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.”* Deuteronomy chapter 28 provides numerous examples of God's promises to reward obedience with financial blessings. We do need a measure of financial provision to survive, take care of our loved ones, and do the work of ministry. God knows this and He's a good Father who promises to meet our needs, providing we *first* seek His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:32-33). It's good for God's children to seek financial blessings, provided that our motives are pure. James 4:3 says, *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”* We're called to be disciplined, hardworking people who earn our living and aren't a burden to others (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10). We're called to be generous givers. One way we give thanks to God is by supplying

the needs of the Lord's people (2 Corinthians 9:6-15). If we all give financially to help one another, then obviously, it's not wrong to have the money to be able to give to others, nor is it wrong to be the one to receive help. However, the Bible gives many warnings about money. Ephesians 5:5 identifies greed as idolatry saying, *"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a person is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."* 2 Timothy 3:1-9 lists attributes of the wicked calling them "lovers of themselves," "lovers of money," and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Speaking of the rich young man in Matthew 19:24, Jesus says, *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."* Only by God's grace do we enter His kingdom, and with God all things are possible, including the salvation of both poor and rich (verse 26). But don't miss Jesus's point - wealth *is usually* a snare! It can hinder salvation and fruitfulness. Ecclesiastes 5:19-20 says, *"When God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil--this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart."* While blessing and comfort is a gift from God that makes us happy, it can also distract us from deeper reflection on eternal matters. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 says, *"Godliness with contentment is great gain... if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

**3. Are You Free of the Love of Money?** Jesus's Parable of the Sower, Luke 8:4-15, describes the word of God as seed that was spread by a farmer onto one of four different types of path, three of which were bad. One of the bad paths was seed that, *"fell among the thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants."* Jesus says, *"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature."* Be the good fertile soil, not the thorny ground! Resist the temptation to focus on temporal things, living in pursuit of wealth, comfort, and pleasure. A focus on this leads to spiritual immaturity, fruitlessness, self idolatry, rebellion against God, and ultimately Hell. Evaluate your own lifestyle, financial position, and spending decisions with questions like these. Am I willing to *sin* against God for any reason; whether to acquire wealth, enjoy simple pleasures, or even to take care of basic needs? Do I seek *first* God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)? How am I prioritizing my time, energy, talents, spiritual gifts, relationships? Are they being stewarded for God's glory and eternal purpose for my life? Is my life centered on activities that serve my own interests and pleasures? In both lack and abundance, am I content and grateful to God? Do I express my gratitude to God by giving generously? Fix your hope on God, not money. Store up eternal treasures in Heaven; use your money to glorify God and bless others! 1 Timothy 6:17-19 says, *"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, remove my love of money. Help me to seek You first, steward Your money for Your glory, and be grateful, content, and generous, despite my status. In Jesus' name. Amen.