

WEALTH AND HUMILITY – A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

By John Gagliardi



One of the greatest dangers marketplace ministers face – and it can be a very subtle one – is that, as we operate God’s divine laws of financial blessing, and see multiplied wealth and power flowing, we forget where it all came from in the first place.

The Bible warns us of this very human inclination a number of times – but pride can come in so many varied and deceptive ways. We see it in the stories of the various kings of Israel, from Uzziah who became proud and turned leprous, to Saul who exalted himself to the priestly role and lost the kingdom, to Solomon the wise and wealthy son of David who left a legacy of a divided and weakened kingdom.

It is very human to find it so easy to be humble when we are poor and weak. But then the Bible tells us that if we sow, we will reap – and reap bountifully, “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6: 38). With “bountiful reaping” comes wealth, and with wealth comes power – the most beguiling and enticing of all drugs.

However, power – like money itself – is value-neutral. Money and power can be used for evil, and it can be used for good. It all depends on the character and value-system of the person possessing the money and power. For Christians, enter the Word of God.

The Bible is there as an everlasting guidepost for us, a lighthouse by which we can chart our lives. True humility is when we open ourselves to the Word of God, and are prepared to trust and obey that Word in all and every circumstance.

The Word gives us all the guidance and teaching we need – we do not need self-help manuals teaching us how to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps. God will “pull us up” – he will raise us up in holiness and righteousness, and set us on a solid foundation.

Indeed, James tells us that if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt us and lift us up (James 4: 10), and that while God will resist the proud, he gives grace to the humble (James 4: 6). Peter continues the theme: "Be clothed with humility, for God resisted the proud, and giveth grace to the humble ... Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5: 6).

For we in the marketplace, it so often starts with money. Again, the Bible warns us very clearly in 1 Timothy 6: 10 that the love of (or lust for) money is the root of all kinds of evil (pride, arrogance, dishonesty, cheating, lying, immorality, extravagance and profligacy, overindulgence in food and drink, drug addiction and so on). The sad truth is that when you are poor you usually can't afford all these indulgences. But with money, a whole new world of temptation opens up to us!

I always worry when someone has sudden wealth thrust upon them – if you look at the sad statistics worldwide of lottery winners, you find overwhelmingly that within a short period, most are worse off than before they won the money.

If God is going to bring wealth to us, He will bring us through a period of trials and testing, where our attitude is tested and refined. God has to be sure that wealth will be a blessing, not a curse.

The bottom line is that we must always keep in mind just where our wealth has come from – God may use the talents He has given us, but in the final analysis it all comes from God, not from us.

A key Scripture is Deuteronomy 8:18 – this pivotal verse tells us to remember the Lord our God, that it is He Who gives us the power or ability to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant. It is not our skill or ability or cleverness – it is God and God alone.

We forget or ignore this fundamental truth at our peril. There are altogether too many Christians who have become wealthy only to forget where their wealth came from, turning into the worst kind of hypocrites, or even throwing God out of their lives completely as they sate their lusts in greed, depravity and debauchery.

Yes, God wants us to prosper. Yes, God gives us the power to get wealth. But he wants us to be pure and holy and submitted vessels so He can trust us to use the wealth (and power) for His purposes.

It is only by submitting totally to God's purpose for our lives, that we are ultimately freed to fulfill our God-given destiny. And if that destiny is to gain and to use great wealth and power, it is only in submission to Him that we can move ahead safely and not run the risk of bringing disaster and disrepute on ourselves and those around us.

You are a people set apart as holy to God, your God. God, your God, chose you out of all the people on earth for Himself as a cherished, personal treasure ... You'll live and prosper and enter and own the land that God promised ... (But) ... Remember that God, your God, gave you the strength to produce all this wealth, so as to confirm the Covenant that He promised ... as it is today (Deuteronomy 7: 6; 8: 1, 18)