

I. Introduction.

II. How did we get into this mess?

A. The Bible teaches that wealth is built up over time through diligence.

- 1. You make money by working hard and working smart (hard work times skill) the product of which benefits the other party in the transaction. Pr. 10:4b 22:29 6:6ff *The hand of the diligent makes rich... Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings...Go to the ant O sluggard!***
- 2. Wealth is to be built gradually through productive labor. Those who try to get rich quick will ultimately fail. Pr. 13:11 28:20,22 *Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it... A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.***
- 3. People have tried to circumvent God's way of earning wealth by trying to 'get rich quick' through speculative investing. Pr. 28:19 *He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.***
- 4. Speculators drove home prices (and perhaps stock prices) to ridiculous heights.**
- 5. People have failed to learn from the past.**

B. The Bible teaches that debt is foolish (and enslaving). Pr. 22:7 *The borrower becomes the lender's slave.*

- 1. Our nation is in debt to other nations. Dt. 28:43-44,12 15:6**
- 2. Our federal government has created a national debt of over ten trillion dollars.**
- 3. Our whole economy is built on debt.**
- 4. Businesses are highly leveraged, relying on debt rather than capital.**
- 5. Individuals have financed lavish lifestyles, not from hard work and saving, but through debt.**
- 6. The government has encouraged people to get into more debt.**
- 7. Loans were made to people who could not afford to repay them.**
- 8. The housing bubble finally burst, creating financial chaos.**
- 9. The whole financial system has been poisoned: banks, brokerages, insurance.**
- 10. The government is trying to get us out of the tailspin by creating more debt.**

C. The Bible teaches that surety (co-signing for someone else's debt) is deadly.

Pr. 6:1-5 22:26-27 *Do not be among those who give pledges, Among those who become guarantors for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take your bed from under you?*

- 1. The government has made all of us a surety for the bad debts of others.**
- 2. Those who saved and avoided debt are having to pay for the foolishness of others.**

D. The Bible teaches that people are held accountable for their bad decisions. Gal. 6:7

- 1. Those making the risky loans were not at personal risk when the loans went bad.**
- 2. Borrowers are now being encouraged to stop paying their mortgages. Ps. 37:21**

E. The Bible teaches that greed produces all kinds of evil. I Tim. 6:10

- 1. Many have lied in an attempt to make more money.**
- 2. Greedy people who get rich by oppressing others will be judged by God. Pr. 22:16 11:6 13:11a Js. 5:1-8 *He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself...will only come to poverty...The treacherous will be caught by their own greed.***
- 3. The depth of our trouble is the degree of our folly and sin. Num. 32:23**

III. What spiritual lessons should we learn?

- A. God has humbled mankind. Isa. 45:6-7 Js. 4:13-17 Pr. 16:9 19:21 21:1 Ps. 115:3 I Cor. 3:19 Jer. 17:5-6 Dan. 4:14ff *The mind of a man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps...The wisdom of the world is foolishness before God.*
- B. Wealth has limited value. Mt. 6:19-21,24 Pr. 23:4-5 11:28 30:8-9 16:16 Lu. 12:15ff II Pe. 3:10-11 Isa. 55:1-3 Ecc. 4:8 6:2 *Do not weary yourself to gain wealth... When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens... He who trusts in his riches will fall... How much better is it to get wisdom than gold. And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.*
- C. Learn to live more wisely.
1. Acquire a valuable skill and work hard. Pr. 10:5-6 6:6-11 12:24 22:29
 2. Spend your money carefully. Pr. 21:5 *The plans of the diligent lead to advantage...*
 3. Avoid extravagance. Pr. 21:17 *He who loves pleasure will become a poor man. He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.*
 4. Learn to be content with less. I Tim. 6:6-8 Heb. 13:5-6 Phil. 4:11-12
 5. Avoid debt. If you must borrow, don't put yourself in a position in which you may owe more than the collateral is worth or be unable to pay in the future. Pr. 22:7
 6. If you are in debt make a radical lifestyle change until you are debt free.
 7. Pay what you owe (avoid bankruptcy). Pr. 3:27-28 Ps. 37:21
 8. Never make yourself liable for someone else's debt (cosigning). Pr. 6:1-5 22:26-27
 9. Save for future needs (winter, skinny cow years). Pr. 6:8 30:25 Gen. 41
 10. Diversify your savings. Ecc. 11:6

IV. What are the the challenges and opportunities the church faces in troubled times?

- A. Affliction teaches us important lessons. Ps. 119:67,71 Js. 1:1ff
- B. We are at risk of losing some of our freedoms. I Sam. 8:11ff
- C. We need to be prepared to suffer some deprivation.
- D. We have opportunity to learn to trust God to meet our needs. Isa. 12:2-3 26:3-4 Mt. 6:25-34 Pr. 10:3 13:25 Ps. 37:25
- E. It will take more faith to give to the Lord's work. Pr. 3:9 II Co. 8:1ff
- F. We may have opportunity to sacrificially love and help one another. Pr. 19:17 28:27 Acts 4:32-37 2:44-45 I Jo. 3:17 5:20 Gal. 6:10
- G. We may have more opportunities to present the gospel of grace to a lost, fearful world.

V. Concluding applications.

- A. Seek God's kingdom first. Mt. 6:33,19-21
- B. Christ is our Sabbath and our Jubilee! Lev. 25:10ff Dt. 15:1
- C. Jesus is our surety who not only paid our debt, but made us rich. II Co. 8:9

Discussion questions

1. What biblical principles of financial wisdom has our nation violated?
2. Why is debt unwise? How has debt contributed to the financial crisis?
3. What is surety and why is it foolish? How has surety contributed to the financial crisis?
4. According to the Bible, how is wealth to be created?
5. What are some spiritual lessons we should learn from this financial crisis?
6. How can you be free from worry?
7. How can you be prepared for hard times?
8. What challenges may face the church in these troubled times?
9. What opportunities might we enjoy during these trying times?
10. In what sense was Jesus surety for us?