

Bible Text: Proverbs 28:22-28
Preached on: Monday, January 13, 2014

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We're turning this morning if you have your Bibles, to the 28th chapter of Proverbs. We want to read at verse 22.

“22 He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. 23 He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. 24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer. 25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. 26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. 27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. 28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.”

Let's ask the Lord's blessing on his word.

Our Father, we thank thee now for the privileges that is ours to open thy word of truth. We look to thee as the one who has promised to bless us, to give us wisdom, to set before us the way of righteousness that we might walk in it. We know, Lord, that our only need is a heart that is opened, a mind that is willing to understand and do that which you've given us to do so now we pray that the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior might be magnified here and that we might understand more fully thy perfect will, that we might walk in the light of it. We do thank you today for the precious blood of Calvary's cross, for the glorious truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We're looking forward to his coming in mighty power to take us to be with himself and how we do pray that we might be found faithful when he comes. To that end, we ask that the word of God might help us this morning, that the Lord Jesus might in all things, have the pre-eminence. We pray it in his precious name. Amen.

I was working this past week here on the 28th chapter of Proverbs, working on my message for tonight and I'm a little bit hard-headed at times, most of the time as a matter of fact, but I believe that it's finally beginning to penetrate my head that I was working on a message that the Lord wanted preached this morning. I'm going to do something today that I've never done in 11 years of preaching. I'm going to talk about money and giving

just before we're going to have an offering. As I've told you many times, I don't like to do that because even though I know how fundraising is done, I'm not a fundraiser. I believe that the Lord expects people to give cheerfully and responsibly, to give out of a heart that is filled with love for him and not out of coercion by any preacher. But I'm equally convicted and convinced of the fact that I'm going to preach the message this morning that the Lord wanted preached.

It's based right here in these verses that we've read in the last portion of the 28th chapter of Proverbs. We've been seeing, as we have studied through this book, that we have the wisdom of God set forth here on every imaginable subject iff we could break life down into categories. If we wanted to talk about bringing up children or friendships or eating habits or the nature of man or practically anything you could name, we could find those subjects covered here within the scope of the book of Proverbs. In fact, we'd find several verses that relate to every single major factor of human existence.

I think it's important that in the book of Proverbs, as in all the rest of Scripture, we find that space is devoted to a subject based on the relative importance of it and so the Bible wouldn't have to be a 20 volume encyclopedia instead of a book that you could carry to church with you. Things are in the book according to God's wisdom based upon their relative significance. For example, the book of Proverbs contains only a few verses about eating. Well, we think eating is pretty importance because we have to eat to live. Two or three times a day people eat; they spend a great many more hours buying food and preparing it and cleaning up from it. It seems to be a significant portion of life but I think the explanation for that is quite obvious: the Bible devotes a proportionate amount of space to a subject not based on its importance as we perceive it to be but based on its importance to the Lord.

The Lord Jesus said, "Take no thought for what you shall eat or what you shall drink or for your body, what you shall put on but seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Clearly he didn't mean giving up eating, nothing spiritual about that. He simply meant not to worry about it, "Take no thought for what you shall eat." He was saying, "Don't view eating as being of any great spiritual significance. It's not that which goes into a man that defiles him as that which comes out of him." He was saying, "Don't spend an inordinate amount of time occupied with the implications of food."

Now, I cite that example of relative unimportance to one now of great importance. The subject is what we might call Christian economics. I use that broad term because economics involves not only money itself: it involves earning it and lending it and saving it and investing it and giving it away and desiring to have it. There are a great many things involved in what we might call broadly "Christian economics." But here in this portion that we've read this morning, we've seen three verses within this short span that are related to Christian economics, having to do with some facet of the financial life of Christians. Just out of curiosity, I went back to see how prevalent that was in the book of Proverbs as a whole and found that in the beginning up to this point in time, there are no less than 123 verses which deal directly with the economic situation of the Lord's people

and a whole lot of others that have an indirect bearing but I'm talking about things directly related to the financial circumstance of the Lord's people, 123 verses.

You'll notice here in verse 22, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." He's talking about finances. Verse 24, "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer." He's talking about stealing money. Verse 27, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." He's talking about giving away money.

A good question that we might ask at the beginning of all this is something that relates to what I said a few moments ago: Scripture space is something that is allotted on the basis of importance. We know that but that being true, why would it be that the Bible says so little about eating and so much about economics? Money is obviously, in many ways, attached to this world just as much as food is. It obviously gets people in all sorts of trouble with regard to their spiritual life. But why would the Lord be so concerned about money and so unconcerned about eating?

I think we'll find the answer if you'll turn to the 16th chapter of the book of Luke. Notice what we read in verse 9, the Lord Jesus is speaking here, he says, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." The Lord has just told the parable of the unjust steward; talked about the man who was in charge of the money and went around making deals with his clients when he found out that he was going to lose his job. He says in verse 9, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." As he sums everything up here in the 9th verse, he gives money a new name, he calls it "the mammon of unrighteousness." Again in the 11th verse he uses that term, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Again in verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

So, three times he uses that term. Now, mammon is the Aramaic form of a Greek word for the god of money or the god of riches. The Greeks had a god for everything: they had a god of war, a god of the sun, a god of the moon, a god of peace, a god of nature, a god of sex. They had gods for everything. I'm sure you remember how Paul was in Athens, Greece and he was on his way to Mars Hill and he saw these many deities lining the streets of the city and he saw there one statue "to an unknown god." In case they had missed any, they just had one titled as unknown. He used that as an occasion to preach to them there on Mars Hill.

But among the many pagan gods, they had one named Pluto or as we see it translated here into another language, Mammon. Mammon was the god of riches, the god of money. The Lord takes this Greek word and he creates a new term to describe money. He calls it "the mammon of unrighteousness." In other words, "the unrighteous god of money."

If we apply that to the world around us, I believe we get what he was talking about. We can see the meaning quite obviously. But not only do we get the meaning, we understand why money and economic issues have such a prominent place in the Bible. We see they are so important to the spiritual life of mankind.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, we have things written from the human perspective. You see over and over again the term "life under the sun." Solomon is writing about the world the way man sees it in his natural condition and he made this statement there in the book of Ecclesiastes, speaking from the point of view of the natural man, life as viewed under the sun, he said, "Money answereth all things." Now, only two religions exist on earth: Bible Christianity and secular humanism. The Christian believes that God is the final authority, the humanist believes that man is the final authority. The Christian believes that biblical revelation is the source of all truth, the humanist believes that scientific investigation is the source of all truth. The Christian believes that prayer answereth all things, the humanist believes that money answereth all things.

I'll tell you how that works: we believe that prayer with God behind it solves every problem, the humanist believes that money with man behind it solves every problem. That's true in the life of the individual. Most lost people believe that the key to health, the key to a long life, is money. They've got to have money for the cancer society and the heart fund and the best doctors and the best hospitals and the best equipment. That's how you stay healthy and live long, you've got to have money. Most lost people believe that the key to education is to send the child to the more expensive colleges. The more it costs to send them there, the better the quality of education. That's the philosophy of this world. They believe that the key to success is the highest paying jobs. The man at the top of the corporation is obviously the most important, not because he does the most for the company, because he's making the most money. It's the key to success. They believe that happiness is enough money to do anything you want to do. That's being happy: having the financial security to do anything you want. That's the way it is with the individual.

Let's take that a little bit further: nations are made up of individuals. The nation is not some machine out there somewhere in the distance, it is made up of those very same individuals and that which individuals believe and practice is that which nations believe and practice. You see, the philosophy of the individual translated into the philosophy of the government. Now, if you want proof that our country rests on secular humanism instead of biblical Christianity, just look at its economics. That's all it takes to see the truth. They say that the answer to unemployment is to allocate more money to solve the problems. We must have these Federal funds to stop unemployment. They say that the answer to disease is enough money. If we can give out enough research grants; if we can train enough scientists to study the problems of disease, then we're going to stop disease altogether. They say what we have to do is build hospitals. We must have hospitals to stop disease. Right now in the state of California alone, 40% of the hospital beds are empty.

But those are temples, you see. They are temples built to the philosophy of secular humanism, the idea that the key to life, the source of life, is to be found in evolutionary

science. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is saying right now that the answer to racial discrimination in the university system of North Carolina is to spend 125 million dollars. You don't have to change your heart; you don't have to get your attitude right about the face that God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the earth. Just allocate enough money and we'll agree that you're not discriminatory. Money answereth all things, you see. That's by the estimation of the natural man.

When it comes to the success of the nation, they don't look at the condition of the citizenry, they don't look at the morality of the people or their godliness. The success of the nation is measured by the gross national product, the economic indicators, because they think money is the answer. That is a part of the religion of secular humanism that money answereth all things. You'll find that in their churches. In liberal churches today, where the religion is just secular humanism dressed up in a black robe, the same thing is true. No difference there. Money to the World Council of Churches is going to promote peace. They build lavish cathedrals, when they build great church buildings, with money that's been given to placate God. It's exactly the same philosophy.

That's the other religion for you, the religion of secular humanism and it touches every facet of life when it comes to the world economy. But look at verse 9, the Lord says, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Notice that the Lord didn't say here, "Take a vow of poverty." He doesn't tell us to forget about money altogether. The Lord here says, "Take money, which is a god of the lost, and make it your friend. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, the good of money that lost people worship."

Now, how do we do that? Does the Christian simply forget about doctors and hospitals and poverty and the need for education and the success of the nation? Of course we don't. The Bible speaks to those issues as things of legitimate concern in the life of the Lord's people but there is a difference. Remember, the god of humanism is man. The God of the Christian is the God of glory. The humanist believes that money answereth all things, the Lord's people believe that prayer answers all things. I'll give you an example, we were talking about sickness and disease: the Bible says, "Is any man sick? Let him pray." That's the Bible's solution. We were talking about hunger and poverty: the Bible says, "When ye pray say, Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread," praying about conditions of poverty. We were talking about education: the Bible says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Let's pray so that you can get educated. We were talking about the success of the nation: the Bible says, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways." So, money answereth all things for the humanist but prayer answereth all things for the Christian.

This is one reason why money is given such a prominent place here in Scripture because it's a warning. It's become a god to individuals and nations. It's taken the place in society that God was to take, carrying out the functions that he, alone, should be looked to, to carry out. As long as men are looking to money to do for them what God alone can do,

we're going to see the nation crumble. Millions of people die, they lose their souls because life was spent looking to the almighty dollar to save them instead of the Almighty God.

Okay, but there's another reason why money is so prominent in Scripture: notice the first verse of Luke 16, "And he said also unto his disciples." What we've just learned about the god of money was not the point of this passage of Scripture, it was just a side issue that is worth noting because here the Lord was teaching his disciples. "And he said also unto his disciples." He was talking to those who claimed to believe the truth, to know him as their Savior. With that in mind, look again at verse 9, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

A little bit of thinking tells us two things: speaking from the Lord's point of view, money, per se, is that which is least. That's what he calls it here. If you have not been faithful in that which is least, he's talking about the money. Money is the least to God because he owns everything there is and he's not short on it. He doesn't need our money. The key word here is the word "faithful" in verse 10. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." So we see two things there: money in and of itself is that which is least but we see secondly, that the use of money, our faithfulness to the Lord and the use of money is critically important. In fact, it's so important that it decides whether God will give us the true riches or not. Think about that for a minute because that is an extremely serious implication. Verse 11, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" The implication of that rhetorical question is that God will not commit to our trust the true riches, the things that really matter, unless we're faithful to him in that which is least, the unrighteous mammon. That makes money critically important.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned to you some of man's major concerns: disease and the preservation of life; poverty and the escape from it; education; the success of the nation. The Bible makes it very clear that those are things that money can't buy. The true riches. Health comes in answer to prayer, that's one of the things you can't buy with money. You can treat the problem but you cannot buy good health. Daily bread comes in answer to prayer. You might think it comes from the grocery store but you wait until the famine comes, the kind they used to have back in the Old Testament when God was judging nations. Money can't buy bread that's not in the store and bread cannot be in the store without God's sunshine and rain. If God doesn't send the ingredients necessary, things that man can never produce, money is worthless because you can't eat. Daily bread comes in answer to prayer.

What about education? Wisdom is the key to education and prayer is how we get it. "If any man lack wisdom? Let him ask of God." The same thing is true of the success of the nation, the success of the people. God alone gives that. The Bible teaches us time and

time again that he sets up one and he takes down another. Nations stand or fall according to God's stamp of approval on the nation. But here is the point, the Lord is saying this: he's saying if you want health, if you want daily bread, if you want wisdom, if you want a successful nation, if you want those true riches which he, alone, can give in spite of our prayers, he will not commit to us the true riches unless we've been faithful in the use of our money.

That's an awesome thought. We've seen some tremendous miracles in this church in terms of people's health, in terms of daily provision, in terms of the education of our children, even our affect on the success of the nation. We've seen some tremendous miracles and I'll tell you the reason: it's because of the generosity of the Lord's people; it's because having been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God has to a very great degree committed to us the true riches. I think it's important that we understand the significance of this because most people don't understand it. There is a world full of Christians who are miserable and have terrible problems, they can't figure out why they can't get their head on straight about Christianity, about serving the Lord, and I'll guarantee you, you can trace it back to this root. That's why people become so disturbed when you start talking about money. That's why people say, "All the church ever talks about is money." Dr. DeHaan used to say, "The most sensitive nerve in the human body is the one that runs to the pocketbook." He was a medical doctor, by the way.

Now, speaking of health, I'm sure you remember Ananias and Sapphira there in the 5th chapter of the book of Acts. They dedicated money from a piece of land to the Lord and then they changed their minds. It seems pretty simple. The Lord didn't need their money but it cost them their health. I mean, their health got so bad they just fell over and died because of their unwillingness to keep their word to the Lord about that proposition. Or we could think about poverty. What about the widow who gave her last handful of meal to Elijah there in 1 Kings 17? The Bible said "she went and did according to the saying of Elijah and she and he and her house did eat many days." All she had was one handful of meal but she was faithful in giving that which is least and the Lord took care of her poverty.

What about education? We could think about Solomon in 1 Kings 3. God says he gave up his money for his education. He could've been the richest man in the world but God gave him an education, he gave him a wise and understanding heart so that there was none like him, the Bible says. Or we could talk about the success of the nation. In 2 Kings 12, there is an interesting story. King Jehoash was in power and the people brought their money to the Lord's house. They brought it and Jehoash used some of that money to build the Lord's house but he used some of it to preserve the nation. It's a very interesting story. An evil king was about to come in and take them captive but the Lord used that very money that the faithful had brought to turn back the alien government. Things like that are a part of history.

But we all know the truth, don't we? We know that only God can give health. Only God can give wisdom. Only God can give wealth. Only God can give freedom. It's not the money as the response of a heart filled with love for him that he honors and nothing else.

The unrighteous mammon is simply a test to prove the sincerity of our love. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is “though he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich.” With all the riches of deity at his disposal, he took upon himself the poverty of humanity, came to a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. That's because the Lord Jesus knew the depth of our spiritual poverty. He knew the bankruptcy that sin had brought to the human heart and he gave himself freely. He shed his blood willingly. He took our sin upon himself to pay the debt that we could never pay. The riches of his grace, the Bible calls it.

That's something we can never repay. We could never deserve it. But it takes a very twisted and distorted mind to think that somehow we're going to pay God back. You don't pay for things like that. But we can trust him as our Savior. By faith, we can accept the gift of eternal life and know that our sins are forgiven and from that point in time, we can trust him daily to honor us, to help us, to give us the wisdom that we need to reach out and touch the lives of others for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust you understand this morning that a great multitude of people are going to burn in hell forever because of the god of money. They achieve a little bit of success in this world, a little bit of security and stability and that became their hope. Having things became their god. They will be lost forever. And the only solution for that, the only remedy, is to come to see our poverty, to see that our bankruptcy is spiritual, that we need the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior. But, you know, a very similar situation is true of the Lord's people. It's so easy to get saved and get a little bit of money and go right back to depending on the money in the bank instead of the Lord in glory. It's very easy, indeed, to get to thinking that we're being protected by our bank account or by our savings account or by what we're living in or what we're driving instead of the God who made all things.

Now, I hope the rapture comes before we find out that's not true but it may not and what a shock it's going to be to some people to be one day secure, trusting themselves, trusting in their resources and to wake up the next morning, like most of us, with absolutely nothing except the Lord Jesus Christ to hold us up from day to day. That could happen in this economy at any moment. So, all I'm doing today is pointing out to you a simple Bible principle but it's one that governs every facet of your life. You make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, when you drop dead, these friends, this money will receive you into everlasting habitations, treasure laid up in heaven. Be willing to walk by faith not only when you're about to die or when your child is an automobile accident and can't live without the Lord's help. Be willing to trust the Lord financially to give you that which you need to do what he would have you to do for him.

Let's bow together as we close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we know that you've promised to bless your word. You promised that it will not return void but it will accomplish that which you please. Lord, you know that our purpose here today is to preach the word of God faithfully, not to raise money. You know

that the desire of a great many people in this church, across this state, has been to sacrifice for thee. How we do pray that you'll honor that. How we do ask you to bless our efforts in seeking to preserve our freedom, get out the gospel to the world and to the nation. How we ask you to commit to our trust the true riches because we've sought to be faithful in that which is least. We pray that should there be those here today who are still outside the Savior, that this might be a time when they'll understand something of the unsearchable riches of Christ, something of the matchless glory of that one who was willing to lay aside the wealth of eternity to take upon him the limitations of humanity, to die as our substitute, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. We thank you that we can commit this to thy care knowing that you will speak to our hearts today if only we'll let you. We pray it in our Savior's name. Amen.