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March 2014

## **SO, YOU WANT TO BE WEALTHY?**

Dear Friends,

In my years of serving God I have heard many sermons about how He wants me blessed financially. *"You're a child of the King,"* some preachers would say, *"and you need to live like a king!"* Others explained that if Christians were living in God's will they would have great increase (which, by the way, is in total contradiction to 1 Timothy 6:3-5). Here are some of the passages of scripture many of those preachers have used:

***Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3:10)***

I was told that God demands my tithes and that my tithes open the windows of Heaven, but it is my offerings above and beyond my tithes which determine how much comes out of the windows. Therefore, the more I give, the more I will receive. This goes right along with another verse so often used to promise great wealth.

***But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)***

It was taught that the more I give, the more I will get. I was promised 30, 60, and 100-fold returns on my offerings. Occasionally, some of these preachers use a specific verse to promise extravagant wealth. I'll give you two examples.

***Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. (Psalm 67:6)***

Using such a verse they would say something like, *"God told me before the service that this is the time for increase. Everyone who will pledge a monthly offering of \$67.60 to my ministry for the next twelve months will qualify to receive this outpouring of abundant increase!"* The pledge of \$67.60 is based on the verse in Psalms (67:6). In a variation of this theme they might use the following verse:

***The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. (Psalm 115:14)***

The "promise of wealth" would go something along these lines, *"God told me that He is releasing a new anointing from Heaven. It's an anointing of wealth that will cause you and your children to see a tidal wave of finances flow into your lives. All you have to do is pledge a monthly offering of \$115.14 to my ministry to activate this wealth anointing."*

Then there are the preachers who teach about the power of our confession, maybe using passages such as Mark 11:23 to support their sermon, subsequently telling Christians to stand up and say something like, *"Money, you come to me right now!"*

In essence, what is taught focuses on Christians coming into possession of great financial wealth. Many who have heard these sermons begin developing the image of tremendous increase within a matter of days or weeks. Today they see themselves living paycheck-to-paycheck and barely getting by; but they anticipate that in a few days or weeks they will be shopping for a big, new house, new cars, clothes, jewelry, etc.

This rags-to-riches concept of overnight fortune is horribly misleading. The following statistics were gathered from various financial service web sites. Their research, which focused on people who have gone from very little to incredible wealth in a short period of time, revealed that as of December 31, 2012:

- The average income for U.S. citizens was \$44,321.67 per year. This comes out to \$21.31 per hour for a 40-hour work week. After 40 years at that income, a person will have made \$1,772,866.80
- The average salary for players in the National Football League was \$1.9 million. This comes out to \$913.46 per hour. At that salary, in just five years a player will have made \$9.5 million.
- The average salary for Major League Baseball players was \$3.2 million. This comes out to \$1,538.46 per hour. At that salary, a player will have made \$16 million in five years.
- In the National Basketball Association, the average salary was \$5.15 million per year. This comes out to \$2,475.96 per hour. At that salary, in just five years a player will have made \$25.75 million.

These salaries for athletes do not include contract signing bonuses, performance bonuses or endorsement and merchandise fees. Thus, the typical professional athlete in the U.S. will make more in one year than most of us will earn our entire lives. The moment they sign their contracts, these athletes will instantly be making millions of dollars more than they were just seconds prior to signing. Many will walk away from signing that contract holding a "signing bonus check" worth at least of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

How many of us have thought, "It sure would be nice to get that much money in the blink of an eye!" Yes, those athletes instantly go from a meager annual income to opulent wealth, not too dissimilar from the way many Christians seem to think their giving is going to produce phenomenal increase. But take a look at these additional, sobering statistics from the research:

- Within 5 years after leaving baseball, the bankruptcy rate among ex-players is four times that of the national average of U.S. citizens.
- Within 5 years after leaving basketball, 60% of the former players will file bankruptcy.
- Within 2 years of leaving football, 78% of ex-NFL players will face severe financial distress or file bankruptcy.

Most people reading this may express difficulty in relating to professional athletes because they do not possess the skills necessary to play any sport at the professional level. Therefore, let's consider a different set of circumstances involving something anyone can do (that I do not endorse): play the lottery.

In July 2013, Forbes released the results of a lengthy study completed by the National Endowment for Financial Education which claims that out of all the people who win a minimum of \$50,000 in a lottery, *70% will go bankrupt*. Out of all the "rags-to-riches-to-rags" stories associated with this research, I will share this one:

- On March 25, 2013, The Hamilton Spectator (a newspaper in Canada) printed the following story: On Easter Weekend in 2004, Sharon Tirabassi, a 35 year-old resident of Hamilton, Ontario, won a lottery and received a check for \$10,569,000.10. A short nine years later she was back in the working class: riding the bus, working part-time to try and pay her bills and living in a rented house.

How could anyone go through so much money and end up nearly destitute? No rational person is going to think, "Wow, I just came into millions of dollars. I think I'll spend it like crazy until I'm broke and homeless!" It seems most Christians think that if they received huge amounts of money they would get out of debt, buy a bigger house, new cars, things for the kids, and, oh yes, give some to their church. No way do they envision themselves again struggling financially, let alone filing for bankruptcy. But I want to make something explicitly clear: **THE WEALTH PROMISED BY THE POPULAR PROSPERITY MESSAGES IS A SET-UP FOR ABSOLUTE DISASTER!**

Christians should thank God that all their tithes and offerings have **NOT** produced the near-instant "live like a king" wealth so many prosperity preachers have guaranteed. Take another hard look at the statistics referenced above: The odds are **AGAINST** any Christian successfully stewarding great financial increase.

*"Yes, but Brother Martin, you seem to have forgotten Proverbs 10:22, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it!"* No, I haven't forgotten that verse. But there is *nothing* in that verse which says the blessed person cannot add sorrow to his life through foolish decisions.

Further studies of those athletes who went from extremely rich to financial collapse reveal four of the primary reasons they have gone broke:

- 1) Overspending
- 2) A lack of financial knowledge
- 3) Poor investment decisions
- 4) Hanging with a bad crowd

Notice anything familiar about these four reasons? They are not restricted to those who have lots of money; they are problems consistent with most people, born again or lost. Someone might say, "But I'm a Christian and I don't hang out with a bad crowd!" I mean no disrespect, but if you are being influenced by sermons teaching that you need and deserve to have lots of money and nice things because you are a Christian, a child of the King, then you are not hanging around with a good crowd.

You see, in all my life I have never once heard any prosperity preacher talk about the potential downfall of quickly coming into great wealth. Instead, all they seem to do is direct a Believer's focus to the personal benefits of having lots of money; what "I" can do for "me" when the abundant blessings flow into my life. But if the majority of all professional athletes and all winners of large lotteries go bankrupt, why should we

believe the same will not happen to us...unless we do something different? What is that "something different"? Read what God has said:

*Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.*

*Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.*

*All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*

*Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.*

*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. (Proverbs 8:1-21)*

*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. (Proverbs 4:7)*

*For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)*

In these passages, God is revealing that His wisdom will empower us to make correct decisions in life. His wisdom will also enable us to see both financial and material increase. He tells us to seek wisdom over seeking great wealth; the reason is because His wisdom will enable us to properly steward all financial increase. Pursuing His wisdom must come first if we are going to avoid foolish choices which can lead to financial ruin. I firmly believe it is very likely that most Christians have not received notable material and financial increase because they have sought money over God's wisdom, and the foundation for supporting that wealth does not exist in their lives.

Further more, these verses from Proverbs tell us that God speaks His wisdom into our lives. Who has been commissioned to teach us all things and guide us into all truth? The Holy Spirit (John 14:26 and 16:13). Who is it that will only speak what He hears? The Holy Spirit (John 16:13). Who is it that empowers us to speak in God's own language? The Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 14:2). As we spend time praying in tongues, the Holy Spirit is imparting to our spirit the perfect prayer that lines up with God's will (1

Corinthians 14:14; Romans 8:26-27). We are speaking directly to God, praying out mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2). Simply put, those mysteries are the things we do not yet understand about scripture, our ministry, our life in Christ, and, relative to this letter, the wisdom of God.

If we redirect our focus from seeking wealth to seeking the supernatural wisdom of God, His wisdom will lay an unshakable foundation that will support the increase we experience. We must sow His word into our heart and pray in tongues for a divine release of God's wisdom into our spirit and mind. Interestingly, the more we seek for and receive His wisdom, the less we will actively pursue wealth, but increase will come. Believe me, God wants you blessed, and when we make wisdom the principal thing in our lives, blessings **WILL** come!

May your heart and mind be filled with God's peace!

*Jim*

### 2014 SPRING PRAYER AND POWER CONFERENCE

The Spring Prayer and Power Conference will be Sunday, April 27 through Friday, May 2. Pastor Dave Roberson and Gary Carpenter will be with us again; other ministers may be here as well. Our primary host hotel will be:

Country Inn and Suites - Fairborn South  
3971 Colonel Glenn Highway  
Beavercreek, Ohio 45324  
(937) 429-2222

[www.countryinns.com/fairborn](http://www.countryinns.com/fairborn)

Please note that our ministry does not have lodging facilities; you will be responsible for making your own lodging arrangements. Also, we will not be preparing meals before or after services. You must fly into and out of Dayton International Airport (airport code DAY) in order for us provide transportation to and from the airport and your hotel.

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This month's special offer is a CD of a sermon that was the basis for this letter.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send a CD of the sermon, "So, You Want to be Wealthy?"

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