

“Money and Possessions part 3” Steve Harden

If you would, be turning with me in your Bibles to Matthew 6. We’ll be reading a couple of verses here at the beginning, but then we will be using our Bibles a lot tonight so kind of keep them handy and I will be referencing several passages.

Matthew 6:19: “¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This is the word of God.

There was a game show that started back in 1963 and ran with the same host for the next thirty years. How many of you all remember Let’s Make a Deal? Alright, some of you do, and I know they remade it, but Monty Hall was the host for 30 years and it was really pretty simple. People from the studio audience were selected to be traders and to make a deal with the host of the game show. They would be given something of value and then they would be given the option to trade whatever they had of value for whatever was behind door one, two or three and that could be something of much greater value or it could be a zonk and have no value and they didn’t know until they made the choice, until they made the trade. Let’s play our own version, if you will, of Let’s Make a Deal tonight, and we’re going to pretend because I don’t have \$1,000 for each of you. Let’s pretend I’m giving you \$1,000 each. Ten crisp, new \$100 bills and then I offer to make you a trade for what lies behind door number two. All I tell you about what lies behind door number two is that it is extremely more valuable than the \$1,000 that you hold in your hand. In fact, it will be worth one million dollars and more and more as the years continue, but the one caveat is that you have to wait five years before opening that door. What trade do you make? \$1,000 now, or millions five years and beyond?

In a very simplistic way, this is what God offers to us in terms of treasure. We can lay up our treasure in this world, meaning we can gather and hoard our riches and perhaps have lots of treasure, but it will never be safe and it will always be temporary and it will never, ever bring the happiness that we so long for from it, or we can lay up treasure in the next world. It will be far more valuable, it will be permanent, and it will indeed bring about the happiness and the joy and the fulfillment, that soul satisfaction, that each of us long to have. But it’s your choice. It’s your choice: lay up the treasure in this world, or in the one to come.

You see, in the last few weeks we’ve been talking about money and possessions. Now, last week, we talked about the stranglehold that money can so often have on our hearts and our souls. It can just wring the life out of us if we are longing and seeking for money to bring about the fulfillment and the happiness and the joy that we so long for. We saw that seeking to fill that longing of our heart with money is a serious offense to God. It is a violation of the very first commandment He gave us because He says, “You shall have no other gods before me,” and trying to find happiness and joy and fulfillment in money is putting it over and above what God is to us. When we try to make money do for us what only God can do for us, we have become idolaters. So tonight, I want to share with you one way we can fight that stranglehold and Lord willing, next week we’ll look at a second way, but how we can fight against our inclination to use money in a way that it was never designed to be used. When we invest our treasure in heaven, our heart will follow after. If we invest our treasure in heaven, our heart then follows after, and so there’s benefit for us now, but there’s also benefit for us for all eternity because I want to suggest to you that how you use your money and possessions now has eternal consequences. Where your treasure is, your heart will be also. I want to look at it in three ways:

What does the Bible teach about judgement? What does the Bible teach about rewards? What are the implications regarding money and possessions?

So, to start off with, what does the Bible teach us about judgment in that day? Hebrews 9:27 says, "Just as it is appointed for a man to die once, after that comes judgment," in that final day all men, women and children who have ever lived will stand before God. Listen as I read Revelation 20:11: "¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." For those who are not rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ in that day, they must go to destruction.

But tonight, we're talking about us, you and me who are followers of Jesus Christ. When we stand before God in that day, we will say something like this, "Oh God, I stand before you as righteous as your Son, Jesus Christ." Now that sounds so arrogant, doesn't it? That sounds like a position that we dare not take, but my friend, it is the only position for us to have. "I stand before you with the righteousness of your Son." You see, what happens when we come to Jesus is a double imputation. Our sin is placed upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ and He pays the guilt and penalty that our sin deserves. But not only does He pay for our sin debt and our penalty, but He also at the same time imputes to us His righteousness, and so when I stand before God on that day, I will bear the righteousness of my Savior. I will stand before Him in His righteousness, praise be to God. My friends, we will never be judged regarding the sin and the guilt we once bore. Now that bears repeating for what I'm going to say in a moment. Listen carefully, we will never be judged according to our sin and the guilt we once bore.

But the Bible does teach us that there will be a judgement for believers, an assessment, if you will, an evaluation in light of what we've done with what He's given to us, how well we've been a steward of His resources. There are many passages in the Scriptures that shed light on this, and I'm going to give you two. First of all, in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is encouraging the Corinthians in the knowledge that this world is not all there is. They were suffering, they were hurting, and he was saying, 'Look, take heart, this is not the end. There will always be groaning in this world, but now there is a day coming when all will be made right and death will be swallowed up in victory.' He says, 'Take courage, heaven is close.' Then listen to what he says, he says in verses 9 and 10, "So whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what He has done in the body, whether good or evil." I would remind you, Paul is writing to the Christians at Corinth, he's not talking about unbelievers. He's saying, take heart, take courage, we will all appear before the judgement seat of Christ and we will all receive what is due us.

In Romans 14, again in a discussion to the church, he's telling the church about how to get along, because you see, there were people that honestly didn't agree with one another, can you imagine? In the church! In Romans 14, he talks about stronger and weaker brothers and he says, 'You're not always going to agree.' He basically says, cut each other a little bit of slack because you probably don't know as much as you think you do. Join arm in arm, go together and

let God do the judging. Practice a little humility! Now, that's Steve's translation, right? Now in verse 10 this is what he says, "¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.'" ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." Now let me remind you, again, we are not talking about earning heaven by our works, that is not what we're talking about. Heaven is not the believer's reward for doing good things, but we will stand before Him and be judged. Not in regard to our sin, that's been dealt with, but according to our works. Our works will be assessed, and He will reward each of us accordingly from the way we've lived our lives we will be evaluated in light of His kingdom. So, that's what the Bible say about judgment.

Secondly, what does the Bible teach about rewards? We will be rewarded for how well we've stewarded the resources that He has given to us: our time, our energy, our talents, as well as our money and possessions. He will reward us in that day. Paul again, writing to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:10, "¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." Okay. Again, Paul is talking to believers. He tells us the foundation is already laid, that's Jesus Christ, the gospel, grace and mercy, all this is already laid, now what do you build on? If we build on this foundation, this sure foundation, applying our efforts and the uses of our time and talents and energy, if we build for the kingdom good, we are using materials like gold and silver and precious stones, things that will last. But if our efforts are not used to advance the kingdom, our energies are used for selfish reasons, not to advance His will, they are like wood, hay and stubble and they will be burned away. We'll still be saved, nothing changes that, but we forfeit reward that we would have otherwise received.

Chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians, verse 5, "⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." So it's not only what we do, not only our actions, or how we work, we will even be rewarded on our intent and what is going on in our minds. We might be able to fool everyone else and play the good Christian, play church games, but God knows and He sees and we will be rewarded for how well we have longed for His coming, how we have sought to advance His kingdom in our minds and hearts. Again, Revelation 14:13: "¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Do you hear what He says? We are going to rest from our labors, but our deeds will follow. What we do as followers of Jesus matters for eternity, my friend! It matters! One day we will rest! But what we will have done here and now will follow after us.

Our eternal experiences in heaven won't all be the same. It will all be wonderful. We'll all be in heaven. We'll all be joyful and happy, but it won't be the same because some of us will have greater rewards than others based on what we've done on this side of the grave. I don't know what that's going to look like, He doesn't tell us. I don't know what those rewards will

even be. I believe because others have believed it before me, Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan are two that have believed this, and I follow in their steps. But I think with greater reward comes a greater capacity for happiness and joy. That's our reward. Some people will have a little cup and it will be filled with happiness and joy in heaven. Some of us will have 55-gallon drums and again, we will be filled with happiness and joy. John Bunyan wrote about this from the Bedford jail in 1665. He was put there because he preached without a license and I'm going to paraphrase because he wrote the way they talked in 1665, okay? But he wrote this in a sermon, he says, "He that does the most for God in this world will enjoy Him the most in the world to come, because by doing and acting the heart and every faculty of the soul is enlarged and has greater capacity and more room is made for the glory of God. Every vessel of glory will be full in that day, but everyone will not have the same capacity. He that is closest to God and actions show up is the one who will best be able to enjoy him in the kingdom of heaven." So basically what I'm saying while standing in the shadow of those who have gone before me is our greatest role here on this earth is to expand our capacity to know Him, to find the joy in Him, and to glorify Him, to expand that cup if you will, until we will be rewarded and our cups will be full of Jesus and His glory.

So, what does that have to do with a series about money and possessions? Everything! Everything! For you see, God tells us to invest our money wisely. He speaks directly from 1 Timothy 6:17 and following: "¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." So, what does this all have to do with our money and possessions? The means by which we store up treasure in heaven is by not setting our hope on earthly treasures because it's going to be taken away in a moment. You don't see hearses followed by a U-Haul trailer. You're not going to take it with you. It's going to go away. But set your hope in God for He provides all that we need and what He gives will never be taken away. This is the treasure that goes on before us. What does it have to do with money and possessions? Do good with your money right now! Do good with it! Be kingdom minded in your thinking around money and possessions. Be rich in good works. Invest in that which is good and right and helpful. Be generous and ready to share with others. My friends, these principles are good if you have a dollar left in the bank or millions. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, share! Do good to others. Live generously.

I love the story that Randy Alcorn tells in one of his books, he says, imagine you lived during the Civil War, okay? What if you were a northerner living in the south, during the Civil war, doing business? He says, you would do your business in confederate currency, because that was the currency of the land, right? You would do your business and you might amass a lot of confederate currency in that time. But what would you do if you knew that the North was shortly going to win the war? Well, you would be divesting yourself of that currency as fast as you could. You would either be trading it for US dollars, or you would be trading for assets of value because you would know that the confederate currency would soon have no more value.

In much the same way, we are citizens of the kingdom of God, living here temporarily and we are free to use the currency of the day, and we should, and we must. However, our life is going to come to an end, some of us sooner than others. Does it not make sense to send the treasure on ahead? To invest in treasure and money that will never pass away? That is permanent? That neither moth nor rust destroys and that thieves cannot break in and steal? My

friends, this kingdom understanding and having our treasure in heaven means everything toward guarding our heart and not expecting money to do what only God can do, in bringing us peace and happiness and fulfillment. Let's make a deal. You have a choice. Which will you choose? Will you take quick cash here that will be gone tomorrow perhaps? Or will you indeed look behind door two and invest in what will be of far greater value, stored up in heaven waiting for you to enjoy for all eternity.

My friends, I am confident that the Lord has saved me and redeemed me and that I will be able to stand before Him as righteous as Jesus because He gave that righteousness to me. I also long to hear my Savior say, "Well done. Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master. Here are your rewards." Isn't there something deep within you that longs for that too? I love what Jim Elliot says, he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Let's pray.

Oh, Father in heaven, help us to understand. God will you give us a mindset toward our money and possessions that is kingdom minded? And may we long to utilize this money that we have to advance your kingdom? I pray, oh God, that you would give us an understanding of how to do so. Lord, we know how prone our hearts are to long for what money cannot provide. May we find our fulfillment in You. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Will you stand with me and receive the Lord's benediction this evening? The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.