

The Bride Will Not Yield Her Holiness to Money

October 25, 2014



Welcome to the first teaching in this five-part series and it has to do with the love of money; that's part one. I want to begin with Scriptures of Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devote to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. The Scriptures say that the love of money is the root of all evil. When we talk about the love of money we're talking about a preoccupation with money and the things that money can help us attain to.

The repercussions of this sin are really far-reaching and difficult to calculate on the surface. You have to really delve into it to see how much your life is impacted by chasing after things of the world that money can buy. So, with an open heart, the Lord has so many graces for us and as I said before, the spots that we have on our wedding garment have to do with our entanglements in the world. We don't want to have these anymore because it's not long before the Lord's coming for His Bride and we're not ready. We need to be ready so these are teachings to help us prepare to be His Bride without spot, wrinkle or blemish.

I want to begin with some examples and the simplest example that I can think of is, let's say that a person – let's say we're at church on Sunday and someone pulls into the parking lot in an old beater car. You've never seen them before, they just show up in an old beater car. Their Bible's kind of raggedy and their clothes are just kind of plain and simple. Maybe they're a little worn on the cuffs, around the neckline or jeans may have a few holes in them and nothing about them says designer jeans. I mean, this is just a plain, simple person who's coming to worship the Lord on Sunday.

Well, when he walks into the church, immediately he draws a barrage of judgments from people ranging from, okay, is he going to want money for gas, utilities, or is he going to cause trouble? Well, obviously he's not important so we'll just kind of ignore him and look away. He may need financial help so we move on to socializing with our friends and the strata that we're a part of or at least some people think and we kind of ignore that person but we may greet them in the Lord and do the usual things that we do when we greet people at church but there's hidden judgments about that person and questions. Are they going to cause trouble? Are they going to ask for money? What's going to be their issue? Are they here to get something from us?

I'm not saying that doesn't happen but I am saying the attitude, the knee-jerk reaction that we have to people who appear poor can be like that and we need to be real honest with ourselves, guys. I'm talking about me and I'm talking about you and I'm talking about everyone. We really need to be honest and if this attitude of heart is in you at all, you need to take a look at it. So try not to get too upset with me for picking at these things because these are things I've had to overcome too and I could fall in a heartbeat in the same way, again and again. The Lord is constantly giving me the grace to be His emissary; to be His lover of souls.

Some of us have actually sat next to angels in church and not known it and had judgments about the way they were dressed or what kind of car they drove and they weren't even earthly beings.

How does God look upon that man? Well, God may see someone who's a prophet, who spends a lot of time in prayer, who doesn't consider working in this world worthy of his time, rather, he helps people. He's always there when the drunk staggers home from the bars at night. He's there for the little boy who doesn't have a father anymore. He's there for the single mother who has holes in her roof and water leaking in. He's there for the elderly and the sick person. I mean, this could very well be a visitor who visits shut-ins. This could very well be who this man is but he's just so plain wrapper and so on the edge of looking poor that he brings a knee-jerk reaction from those of us who are used to the finer things in life and are looking to other people who are well-heeled or well dressed.

Maybe the Lord sees him as a prophet and he may even have been sent into the church with a Word for the pastor or a Word for you and because you shied away from him or because I shied away from him I may not get that Word or that healing that he brought to the church. Now, that's a potential. I'm not saying that's everyone, obviously but, I'm saying God looks at him differently. If he is a Christian then Christ dwells in him and it's a great honor to sit next to someone whom Christ dwells in. If he's not a Christian, Christ died on the cross for him and the Lord wants him in heaven with Him and in eternity. In either case, this person has tremendous value beyond what our superficial judgments would automatically react to.

Okay, now, I'm going to get a little stereotypical here but I'll ease up as it goes on. Let's say on the other hand, a well-dressed man, stepping out of a late-model car, wearing a large gold ring with diamonds, carrying a brand new leather-bound Bible walks through the door and heads turn. Wow, he must be someone important. Maybe he's a prophet. Hard to say, you know, he might be. Obviously he's well-to-do, he's a success in life. He was already noticed the moment he pulled into the parking lot because he had a really nice car. He sits close to the front and just being there commands attention. Heads turn and voices whisper, "Who is that man?"

Now, how does God see that man? Well, first of all, the Lord died on the cross for him and if he is a Christian then of course, the Lord lives in him. But, the Lord may see things that aren't apparent to us; hidden things. He may be a land owner with substandard housing. He may be involved in business deals that are a little shady and there may be tenants in his housing that don't have running water and he buys more property instead of fixing up the property that he has that he's renting to the poor. I mean, that's a possibility; we don't know.

On the other hand, he could be a family man that works day and night to make a living for his family. He's very faithful and devoted. He tithes and gives to missions, he may be on a sales trip and he's visiting this church and he's a good upstanding citizen and a good Christian. He does what he can to help. In any case, he's someone we want to get to know. He's someone that we're attracted to and drawn to because he is a success.

The Lord warned us about preferential treatment in James 2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes and a poor man in filthy old clothes comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you right up in front" but you say to the poor man, "You stand over there or you can sit on the floor over here by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Well those are difficult words: evil thoughts, showing judgment because of economic status.

You know, I had a friend once who had been in publishing and we were talking about this very same issue and he said, "I don't see anything wrong with that. I mean, after all, we should associate with people who are on our own level and our own strata." And I was really quite scandalized by that because I know there are many wonderful Christians who make wonderful friends, are very deep and economically they don't measure up. But isn't it about anointing and a relationship with the Lord and devotion to the Lord and brotherly love? Isn't that our standard? Why are we looking at rings and clothing and cars and making judgments based on that? And I want to say this much, in Proverbs 17:5 it says, to scorn the poor is a slap in the face of Jesus and cast not on the cross for it is written, he who mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker.

What I'm saying is that money has very deep roots in our consciousness and people with money have a certain meaning; people without money have another meaning. We need to take a very close look at our attitudes and our preferences for people based on their economic status. I'm going to give you another example but we're going to go from very small examples of how it corrupts a Christian walk to very big ways that it has an effect on the church.

Okay, so, our second example. There was a time in our lives where we went from being fairly well off in the historic district in Annapolis, Maryland living in a nice three-story historic building – house and we went from

fairly well-to-do to poor overnight. Bang! Just like that. We ended up in a tarpaper shack on the side of a mountain in the Poconos in Pennsylvania. Previously we'd attended an affluent Washington, D.C. church and we were drawn into the circle with the pastor and the pastor's wife. They were fond of us and they were very, very good to us. Very good people. He was educated at Oxford and they were spirit-filled and very loving people, really very special.

But when we went from that condition, that social status or that income bracket into being poor and we moved away to a different area, when we walked into church with our four children, we drew some amazing stares and the coldness and the rejection and the suspiciousness of people and of us was amazing. It just totally floored me and I look back on that and I say well, you know, doing without the nice things in life like hot water, you know, doing without that and shopping at thrift stores and whatnot, that's no big deal but the social stigma that's attached to that, the way that people treat you, the opportunities that they close the door on to minister, the way that they judge you, that's a whole different matter. It's like all of a sudden you've gone from being someone who could do something in the church and make a contribution and be helpful to someone who's utterly worthless. I mean, after all, you're not a success. If you were a success then you'd be dressed successfully. And so, if you're not a success, well, we shouldn't hand over the ministry-type jobs to you because you obviously don't measure up.

This is universal. I mean, you know, we can deny it. We can say it doesn't exist but you know it does and it's very painful. It's so terribly painful. And not only are we discriminated against in those situations but our children are discriminated against and we just aren't worthy of the opportunities that the wealthier class in the church get.

You know, I think of Proverbs 13:7 One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, and has great wealth. I have to tell you that when we made this move, our spiritual life exploded in depth and in comprehension; in unity with the Lord, in His priorities, in our love for Him, in teaching our children. Our lives just went – overnight went from being superficially engaged in all the trappings of a well-heeled middle-class family to focusing almost exclusively on the Lord, on integrity, on virtue, on loving Him, on worshiping Him, on learning about Him. Our lives changed overnight.

So, I love this Scripture, One man pretends to be rich, yet he has nothing. I mean, we had running water when it rained. That's what kind of situation we were in. We had to borrow a chainsaw to get wood to stay warm for the winter. Yet has nothing, and another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. So, one man pretends to be rich. When we were in Annapolis, we pretended to be rich. We had all of these things that kept us so busy. Getting the house properly manicured and properly decorated and getting the right clothing and the right accessories for the right clothing and just all the trappings of living. We were just going in a merry-go-round over these things.

I have to remember, Keith Green had a magazine cover, you may not have seen it but if you did, it's kind of hard to forget. They're very famous for their artwork. It was a woman standing in a kitchen -- a yellow kitchen and a classic kitchen and she was like in a swirl of water like she was getting flushed, you know, like whish! And the kitchen it was just spinning around her, you know, and it was swallowing her. That's how we felt when we pretended to be rich. And another has nothing and pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. How beautiful our life was at that time. How rich in the Lord it was.

I'm convinced that this fear of rejection and not being given the opportunities in ministry or in the church haunts a lot of Christians and even pastors. That they really feel obligated to keep up with what they look like, the kinds of things they have, the kind of house they have, their cars. They feel that that's an important aspect of being a shepherd and being a leader is to present a prosperous image.

That brings us to our next example. You know, I don't think the Lord has anything against people who are wealthy and well-groomed. In fact, those are the people that He has chosen to manage the funding of missions and other endeavors for the church for the spread of the gospel. And they are people with great

integrity that He loves very much that He can trust to do His will. Many of the wealthy are and that's a beautiful thing so we're not going to – you know, we're not criticizing wealth or being well-groomed. What I know the Lord doesn't like is to judge people by the world's standards. That's what we're talking about here is judging people's worth based on their economic status. He hates that.

What about pastors who have an eye to expansion of their churches and big prosperous ministries and luxurious homes? Well, let's take a look at that for a minute. I've heard pastors talk about other pastors who are very wealthy and who have a lot of money and incredibly extraordinarily beautiful mansions and I've heard them hold these people up as examples of how they want to be and they want their Christian Body to be – their church to be. I think this is terrible because what are we talking about here? We're talking about all these trappings of the world. We're not talking about anointing, holiness – personal holiness, we're not holding up those examples. We're holding up examples of money. That has to do with the world. That can get us into a lot of trouble.

So, let's say for instance that a pastor of a small church and he is very conscious of how he looks, how he dresses and his appearance at church. At the same time there is a single mother there who doesn't have a car. Now, pastor has saved money, he has a job on the side, he's saved money so that he can go and spend three – four – five hundred dollars on clothing one weekend because the things that he has are getting a little old. And a woman comes to the church who is a regular church goer, she's a single mother, her husband deserted her, she's got children, she has no car. No way to take the kids to the doctor. No way to go shopping. No way to take them on outings. She's in a really rough position not having a car and she finds a car for sale for \$500.00 down payment and that's out of the question for her. She doesn't have that kind of money so she goes to the pastor.

Well now, here the pastor is going to be confronted with a choice. Do I keep up with how I'm supposed to look; this successful, prosperous image or do I give this money to her and go on wearing frayed shirt collars and the same old suits to church? What am I going to do in that situation? Folks, we should never have to make that kind of a decision. That should be a non-existent threat in our lives as Christians. That should be totally irrelevant to us, having to influence other people with our appearance to the point where we can't be very charitable with other people because we need that money to look good.

Another example of a single mother at a conference. She's wanted to go to this conference for months because she heard about this teacher who was coming, a wonderful teacher. She goes to the conference, she finds a babysitting for her children, she has friends that watch her children, and she has a friend who pays for her ticket and they go together. Well, she absolutely adores the teacher and would love to have some of the tapes and books that this teacher has written. So, during the intermission she goes out into the lobby and she looks at all the things that are being offered for sale and everything starts at \$9.95 and goes up to \$29.95, \$59.95, \$79.95. This woman is thinking about cough syrup for her children. She can't go to Walgreens and buy cough syrup and have one of these teachings on CDs and she walks away frustrated, hurt and disappointed.

Well, maybe she writes to the teacher evangelist and asks if they would donate some materials to her. She gets a letter back – a polite letter that says, I'm sorry, we only do that for people who are in the mission field overseas. And the hard part about that is the particular teacher likes clothing, loves to go shopping and talks about that pretty liberally along with her teachings. This is sad. This is just tragic that the woman should go without teachings like that. I mean, where are our priorities? Where are they at? We have such a need to appear in different clothes every time we go out to teach. Where we have to spend large amounts of money on clothing. I mean it's fine that they're probably given to the Salvation Army when you're done with them but what about those women who come to the conference who can't leave with the materials they need to extricate themselves out of a life of despair and poverty and depression? And they don't have – she doesn't have a computer so she can't go online and get some of these teachings. She's lucky if she has a CD player that works. This is another way that this whole culture of prosperity effects the little people and effects their children. Generations we're talking about. Generations are going to be effected by this.

I want to quote 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world -- the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life -- comes not from the Father but from the world and the world and its desires pass away. Goodbye! They're gone. But whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Now, I'm going to talk about someone like that in just a few moments so, don't get discouraged by negative examples. I'm just trying to draw attention to the ways that we really have cheated ourselves out of Grace and cheated others out of Grace by putting such a high priority on these superficial things.

I was once called to travail at intercession for a very famous T.V. minister and after about the third hour in prayer, the Lord stopped me and He made me to understand that this man and men like him, evangelists and teachers like him who lead a very wealthy lifestyle; villas, private planes, expensive cars, chauffeurs, body guards – when they visit other countries, they bring this mentality to poor innocent developing country people who their first introduction to Christianity is, become a Christian; become rich! Look at this, I mean, you know, I become a Christian and I get an anointing for healing or teaching and I can be rich! I can fly around the world and teach. I can have villas, I can have houses, I can have expensive clothing.

The Lord stopped me after about the third hour and I felt so nauseated I knew I had to go to the bathroom to throw up because I felt so grieved over how the Holy Spirit felt over this; presenting Christianity in this light; an affluent, prosperous, money making, financial gain, status building thing! What kind of example are we giving? Hollywood actors or holy Christians? I mean, the Lord was born in a stable and buried in a borrowed tomb.

You know, this man, and many like him, have been surrounded with scandals and divorce and the Scriptures say, Better a little with fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil Proverbs 15:16. And very often, people who have a lot of money don't get any rest or peace from it. Their children fight over it. It doesn't make life better in a lot of ways. It stresses life out.

Now, Paul talks about the evil effects of focusing on money and gain. He says, in 1 Timothy 6:5 People who think that Godliness is a means to financial gain this is what I'm talking about. That's abhorrent to the Lord. 1 Timothy 6:10-11 The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and some people eager for money wander from the faith and pierce themselves through with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all of this and pursue righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Pursue those things. That's the life the Lord came to give us. That's the abundant life, not a life filled with things.

Now, I want to give you my final example of how this kind of corruption can affect the Body on a large scale, another example of that. Let's consider a situation where a wealthy man joins a church and he really likes the pastor, he likes the teachings, he likes everything about it so he becomes an established member and he starts telling his friends and they join. So he gets a little group together after maybe three, four, five years there's several very wealthy people in the church that have formed a little group. They're all friends and they hang out together and they form an elite but powerful clique in the church. Their tithes have enabled the pastor and his family to live a more prosperous life, to have a nice house, a nice car, because they're big tithers, to make plans for their children for a better education. And now the church has become so popular they want to have a building project so they break ground for a new building, a new sanctuary.

One morning, the pastor is in prayer before service and the Lord convicts him of something and he goes in and sets aside the sermon he had in mind and he teaches on what he was convicted of. He shares that with the congregation and there's an altar call and there's a lot of repentance and people come forward. But, this small, elite group didn't like that message so they invite the pastor out to lunch and they have a little talk with him and say, "You know, I don't think that that's something you should be dwelling on and preaching on. I mean, that's really not that important and after all, it's just not that good of an idea to be preaching on that. I think you should be focused more on other things like missions" and so on and so forth.

Okay, so what's the option that this pastor has? Tow the party line or watch the tithes walk out the door. No one should be put under this kind of pressure. The repercussions of that is, if he loses that wealthy clique of men, forget the building project, forget the nice house and the nice car because you're going back to a much more modest living as a pastor. So this is how we get entangled in the world. We spot our garments. We have blemishes and we wrinkle our garments by these entanglements. They put us in precarious situations. Situations where our integrity is on the line. We shouldn't be having to worry about taking care of our family and not offending a certain group of tithers in the church. There should not be that kind of a struggle going on. How do you avoid something like that?

Well, here's where I want to bring up the good example. I want to talk about Heidi Baker. Heidi and Rolland Baker. You know, I may not have all of the facts exactly right in line but I do want to share what I do know about them and that is that Heidi went to Ontario to the Airport Church and got slain in the spirit and knocked off her horse for three days. She was so heavy that they had trouble picking her up and moving her out of the church and taking her to the motel. She just couldn't move. She'd been laboring with Rolland in Africa for, I think, a decade and they were highly educated. She had several degrees and she worked very hard in Africa and had maybe a handful of churches to show for all the hard work that she did.

When she was knocked out and the Spirit of the Lord took over and started doing some things in her, she came back up out of that and she started sharing with people about the wonderful things that happened there and about the Toronto Blessing. Well, the people who were backing her were ultra conservative and they heard about this and that was something they were very unhappy about. They gave her an ultimatum. You go there and you talk about that and we're not going to support you. Well, she had plans for orphanages and all kinds of things back in Africa. She was coming to the States and planning to go back to Africa and get these orphanages built and help a lot of people and all of a sudden, the people who were supporting her said, "We're not going to back you anymore if you endorse the Toronto Blessing because we don't believe it's of God."

That didn't bother Heidi. She knows who her maker is. She knows who she serves. She totally ignored them at the chance of going back to Africa in poverty and not being able to do anything. She knew her God would provide for her. She ignored them and she endorsed the Toronto Blessing. Many other people were blessed because of that. She went back to Africa and the Lord used her to build the greatest ministry, to spearhead the greatest ministry that has ever been on this earth as far as how many souls have been saved. In the history of the world, no one has had as much of an effect in saving souls as Heidi Baker – Heidi and Rolland Baker have had without the backing of the wealthy people that didn't approve of the Toronto Blessing.

That's how we need to handle these things. There is absolutely no comparison between God and the wealthy. We have to stand up for what's right and not compromise and if it means that we don't have an airplane ticket back to Africa, that He has to either bilocate us or we take the slow boat, it doesn't matter. God is going to bring great fruit out of that because you were faithful.

I love, again, 1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Our enjoyment doesn't come from expensive meals, fine dining, traveling and seeing the sights, going to shows or concerts or anything. Her enjoyment comes from seeing the fruit of the spirit, the fruit of her labors. All of these children being born into the kingdom of God, that's where her enjoyment comes from. And if that's where our enjoyment comes from, then we won't be swayed by these compromises. We won't give in to them. We'll be able to keep right on going and say, "Bye-bye! Bye-bye tithes. Bye-bye. I hope you find a church you're more comfortable in."

1 Timothy 6:18-19 And command the wealthy to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so they may take hold of the life that is truly life. Not worldly prosperity but the Pearl of Great Price, the Lord Himself.

So, now, I'd like to talk about the standards and qualifications of Christian ministers. What do the Scriptures say a pastor is supposed to be like? Well, in 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul says, Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. Do you realize what Paul has just said here? Paul has just said that being quarrelsome, being given to drunkenness, being unfaithful to his wife is equal with being a lover of money. That's how important this is.

I've discussed with you probably five or four or five different examples of how this corruption impacts the Body of Christ and how it messes everything up. It prevents people from coming into their full anointings because they're not of the right social status. It cuts off prophetic movements. It cuts off all kinds of things because of appearances, because of social status and money. Although, we will talk about social status in our next teaching.

So, Paul is saying – I mean, this is really revealing. Being unfaithful to your wife is a major thing and he's putting a lover of money equal with that. He's categorizing that as a serious sin. And saying that an overseer who loves money should not be an overseer. And you know, how stark are the words of Paul when he says 1 Timothy 6:6-9 But Godliness with contentment is great gain. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish, foolish, foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. You cannot serve both money and the Lord. Sooner or later He will put you to the test. He'll put you to the test to see where your loyalties lie. He's going to sift you. He's going to find out who you're really serving. Are you serving yourself because you want to be wealthy and prosperous and look good to the community? Or are you serving the Lord and you don't care what you look like to the community as long as your Lord is happy with you?

So, I mean, the example of if we have food and clothing we'll be content with that, oh my goodness. How many people in our culture would be content with food and clothing? That's not even mentioning a roof over your head or a hot shower. So, Paul is talking about some pretty basic standards here. I'm not saying that we should be that primitive but I am saying that all these other entanglements that we get ourselves into to conform and to look good are very destructive and not pleasing to the Lord at all and they prevent you from growing spiritually. I've struggled with these things for years. The Lord is showing me how much He could have done if I had abandoned these things much earlier in my life.

You know, in the end we're going to be judged on what we did and what we failed to do and we're going to face calamity in judgment. The Lord warns us in Ezekiel exactly what that looks like. Ezekiel 7:19 They will throw their silver into the streets, their gold will be treated as a thing unclean. Their silver and gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. It will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has caused them to stumble into sin. Christian people, Christian leaders, Christian pastors don't pursue money and wealth and that image and don't teach your people to do that. Teach your people to be totally, 100% devoted to the Lord without compromising. Teach them simple standards of living. Teach them the important things and to cleave to those things with all their hearts. So much depends on that.

So, what I want to say in the end is please, you know, rethink your priorities. Please, rethink your priorities and what's being taught, what's being modeled for people. The kind of example that you're making. The kind of example that the elders are making. Don't elevate people that have money and put them on a pedestal and talk about how wonderful they are because they've got money. That's the way the world talks. If you've done those things, search your heart. Go before the Lord and ask Him, beg Him

to show you the ways that you've compromised and if you've taught that compromise to other people, repent of that and ask Him to forgive you.

You know, this message is coming with a Grace. It's coming with a Grace to change. It's here before you. If you're willing to look at these dark places in your heart, to give them up and to be 100% sold out for Jesus and for His Kingdom and for His agenda. Right now, the Lord is with you and He's going to give you the Grace to repent and to turn totally around and to show the world what it really means to be a Christian.

God bless you.