

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 3- Luke 3:10-20**

### **34- Bring Forth Fruit Meet For Repentance**

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#### **Luke 3:10-20**

What we saw from **Luke 3:1–9** last week was that John's baptism and his message were both a call to repentance, which means a call for people to stop relying on anything they are by birth and what they have achieved by their effort, and a turning to rely fully and trust fully in the free Mercy of God. This came out most clearly in verse 8 where John says to Jews who were prone to rely on their inherent Jewishness,

**Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.**

Some Jews, then and now, had the mistaken notion that God's Promise to be faithful to the seed of Abraham *guaranteed* their Salvation no matter what they believed and no matter how they lived their lives. But John calls these Jews- who could *physically* trace their bloodline back to Abraham- "sons of the devil" (vipers, v. 7) instead of sons of Abraham and says:

Yes, God will be faithful to Abraham's seed, but your pride has blinded you to who Abraham's seed really are—they are not every single *physical* descendant of the friend of God, but are people who, like Abraham, repent and who bear the fruits *worthy* of repentance. God doesn't need your Jewishness or your bloodline or your righteous acts because God is well able to create people like that out of these stones and leave you to judgment, and yet still be faithful to His Promises.

Now these words were the seeds of a theology that came to full flower in Paul's letter to the **Romans** and to the **Galatians**. Let me just read a few of the key texts. Please turn and read **Romans 4:11&12** with me:

**11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,**

**12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.**

Paul argues here that the *reason* God promised a blessing to Abraham and justified him by faith *before* he was circumcised was this:

The purpose was to make him the father of *all who believe without being circumcised* (i.e., Gentiles), and who thus have righteousness *reckoned* to them, and, likewise, the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised (i.e., not all Jews, but only believers).

Now look down and read **Romans 4:16&17**:

**16 For this reason *it* (Salvation) *is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,**

**17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.**

Paul says here that the Promise to Abraham's seed *depends* on Faith in order that it might *rest* on Grace so that the Promise that God made to Abraham might be sure for *all* the descendants, "not only to those of the law (i.e., believing Jews), but also *to those who share the faith of Abraham* (i.e., believing Gentiles), who is father of us all, as it is written, 'I will make you *father of many nations*.'"

Now please turn over to **Galatians 3:7** and read with me:

**7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.**

**8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

**9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.**

Paul is saying, "**So you see it is men of faith who are sons of Abraham,**" and then down in verse 29, Paul says:

**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

So when John the Baptist warns the crowds not to rely on their Jewishness or their own righteous deeds and says, "*God can raise up from these stones sons of Abraham*", what he was saying was that God's Mercy is so pure that He can make a son of Abraham out of anybody or anything. So from that statement- we rightly conclude that ethnic Jewishness is no guarantee of Salvation and non-Jewishness is no hindrance to Salvation.

In other words- the Way to forgiveness of sins is open to all whom God has chosen- Jew and Gentile- by the very same road—the Road of repentance and Trust. And all who genuinely repent- bring forth the fruits of that repentance. If there is no fruit- then there has been no genuine heart repentance.

Now this means that *anybody* who truly turns from trusting in human distinctives and who turns from trying to earn Salvation by their own actions and who genuinely hopes in the free Mercy of God alone will be saved from the impending Wrath of God that is coming through the forgiveness of their sins- regardless of their nationality and regardless of how bad they have been or much they have sinned! Now that is quite a Promise!

And evidently John's radical message gets through, and the people start listening and a great number of them begin to repent- turning afresh to God's Mercy rather than their own race or their own good works. And the question arises about how such people should now live. How do repentant people live their lives? In other words- is there a

very distinctive lifestyle that grows out of truly relying on Mercy alone?

Some would say in our day that since Salvation is wholly a Sovereign Work of God alone- therefore, it doesn't matter how we live our lives. These people teach that since we are saved by Grace and not through Works that works are completely and utterly irrelevant even after Salvation. But is that true?

I suggest to you this morning that that thinking is completely false and that is very much matters how we live our lives after we are saved. In fact, I am going to work hard this morning to prove to you directly from God's Word that even though it is absolutely true that we are saved- not by our ethnic culture nor the degree of our human will power or efforts- but it is also true that those who actually are saved by Grace through Faith in the finished Work of Christ alone and those who do not trust in their own human goodness nor trust in their own ethnic nationality for Salvation are those who will bear fruit that is "meet" or fitting for repentance. Let's read **Luke 3:10–20** again:

**10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what shall we do?”**

**11 And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”**

**12 And *some* tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”**

**13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”**

**14 *Some* soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And *what about* us, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages.”**

**15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,**

**16 John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

**17 His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**

**18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.**

**19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,**

**20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.**

Now please notice back in verse 10 that Luke writes that the multitudes asked John a very important question *after* they had repented. They asked, "*What then shall we do?*" And then the tax collectors came next and asked John the very same question, "*What shall we do?*"

So we can see here that the question came up then just like the question should come up now- that *after* we believe, *after* we reject our own human works and our own ethnic nationality, *after* we understand the sinfulness of our sin and we repent of our sins, *after* we turn away from wickedness- and *after* we put our full faith and trust in the finished Work of Jesus Christ for Salvation- how should we then live our lives? What sort of things does a person who is happily relying on God's free Mercy do and not do?

So I suggest to you that the very fact that Luke thought these questions important enough to include them in his Story of Salvation that he is writing to this young Roman dignitary named Theophilus proves to us that this is a huge theological point- that is does, in fact, matter how a person lives his life who does *not* trust in his own ethnic culture, a person who does not trust in his own righteous actions, a person who has been given the glorious ability to see the horror of his own sins, and a person who has been graced with the power to gladly and zealously turned from those sins, and a person who has been granted the desire to run to Jesus to place all his trust in the finished Work of Jesus Christ.

And this also proves beyond any doubt that those who teach that it doesn't matter how we live after we are saved, those who teach that Salvation is a guarantee of eternal life- that no matter what you do- no matter what you believe- that no matter how you live your life- that you are safe- that those people are teaching wrongly about the glorious gift of Life that comes in and by and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now listen because this is very important. I am teaching you without apology that the Bible declares that Salvation is eternal-period. That even when you come short of the Glory of God- that

Salvation is eternal, and that since you didn't do anything to earn salvation- you cannot do anything to destroy it. That is exactly what the Bible declares to be true.

In other words- 100% of all those whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world will be drawn to Jesus, and 100% of those who are drawn to Jesus will come, and 100% of those who come- Jesus will receive, and 100% of those whom Jesus receives- Jesus will keep, and Jesus will glorify in Heaven at the last day, and Jesus will lose not one single one of them.

But the flip side is that 100% of those who are truly saved will love Jesus, and 100% of those who love Jesus will hate their sin, and 100% of those who hate their sin will confess their sin, and 100% off those who hate their sin will turn from sin, and 100% of those who turn from sin will live their lives in such a way that is meet or fitting for repentance.

In other words- those who say they are saved and who do not turn from sin, and those who say they love the Lord and are saved and who do not hate their sin and who do not confess their sin and who do not follow after Jesus and who do not bring forth fruit that is meet or fitting for repentance- these people are not proving that there is something wrong with Salvation, they are not proving that Salvation is cheap or that it isn't strong enough to keep us, these people are not proving that Jesus a liar and that He really won't keep us all the way to Glory- no, these people are only proving by their lack of bearing fruit that is meet for repentance that they were never truly saved to begin with and that they are yet in their sins and headed for hell.

You see, even 2,000 years ago- talk was cheap and anybody could say anything. But it is a very simple but profound fact of Scripture that those who are saved will obey Jesus. And Luke gives Theophilus a few examples here from John's preaching to prove that to us. So let's start our examination of these verses with the last paragraph. Verse 18:

**So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.**

We must understand that Luke regards John's message as the *Gospel*, or the Good News, even though it contained warnings of fiery judgment and numerous commands for a giving lifestyle. And I mention this so that we won't be too strict or narrow in our definition of the

Gospel. We must remember, dear friends, that John the Baptist was the last Old Testament Prophet. John operated his entire ministry before the death, burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his life and comprehension and ministry involved things like animal sacrifices and the Levitical Priesthood. John did not yet know as much as we now know about how God would purchase forgiveness of sins through Christ's death and Resurrection.

But even though that is true- let us also be careful not to exclude what John *did* know about the Good News that was breaking into the world already.

1) It is good news when someone wakes you up and says, "*Quick the hotel is on fire, but there is still time. I'll show you how to get out*", as opposed to just letting you continue to sleep and die in the fire because your bed is comfortable and you went to a lot of trouble to reserve that room. So the true Gospel must always contain a warning about the Wrath of God that is sure to come against all unrighteousness. Any "gospel" that eliminates or that marginalizes or that seeks to minimize the Wrath of God is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. John preached in **Luke 3:17**:

**He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

2) The Gospel is *Good* News and not just News precisely because it teaches that the Way to be forgiven of our sins and the Way to escape God's Wrath is to fully rest in God's free Mercy. Any "gospel" that teaches that we have to *earn* Salvation is a lie and is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. And I suggest to you that any so-called "gospel" that teaches that Salvation is God's reward for you living a holy life is not Good News at all- but is, in fact, real bad News because there is no human being born of woman who lives on this earth that can ever live good enough to earn the reward of Salvation.

What terrible news it would be if John had come preaching that Jews can be saved, but not Gentiles. Or, that well-to-do people can be saved, but not poor folk. Or, that white people can be saved, but not Indians, or that black people can be saved but not Oriental people, or that educated people can be saved but not uneducated people, or that

men can be saved but not women, Or that you can be saved if on the judgment day your good works outweigh your bad works.

All of that would be very, very *bad* news, dear friends, and not good news at all. But John preached in **Luke 3:6**:

**AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.**

And it is true that the Way is open for "all flesh" to see the Salvation of God because no human distinctive whatsoever is a precondition of God's Mercy. God's Mercy runs ahead of *all* of our efforts and seizes us before we know it. And the good news is- just rest in this Sovereign Mercy and you will be saved.

3) And notice that it is also part of that good news to be exhorted to live a certain way once you are saved. The good doctor said in **Luke 3:18**:

**So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.**

Now wait a minute. If we are saved by relying solely on God's Mercy- why is it such good news to be told things we have to do? Two reasons at least:

A. Since there is a particular kind of fruit that testifies to the health of a tree- we can reassure ourselves that we are truly a born-again tree by whether we are following those exhortations and bearing that kind of good fruit. As **1John 2:3** says,

**By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.**

So the exhortations of Scripture are good news because they help us know where we are, and whether or not we have been truly born of God. If we fail to meet the test of self-examination- that knowledge should send us flying back to the Mercy of God for forgiveness and help.

B. The other reason exhortations are good news is that the Way of obedience is the Way of joy. There is a deep and profound joy in obeying God that can be found nowhere else. You see, all the joy that sin brings is very fleeting and very shallow. But the joy that obedience brings is



full and rich and deep and powerful- and eternal. There is a lasting joy in doing what God says (no matter how hard obedience may be at that moment and no matter what that obedience may cost you at that moment) than in all the ways of sin put together. There is really no comparison at all. It is the difference between looking at a leaking facet and looking at Niagra Falls. There is the fleeting dribble of joy that the world gives on a very temporary basis and then there is the thunderous and glorious and powerful and unstoppable Joy that comes from a life that is in daily humble submission to the Word of God.

So exhortations are part of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ because they point us along the way towards the greatest fulfillment and joy in this life and in the next. Therefore, any "gospel" that seeks to eliminate or to minimize or to marginalize Biblical exhortation and rebuke and chastisement and correction is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the absence of godly correction *removes* people from the thunderous Niagra Falls Joy that comes from obedience and forces them back into the fleeting and temporary dribble of joy that comes from the world. Please turn with me to read **Hebrews 12:5-11:**

**5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**

**6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."**

**7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?**

**8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**

**9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?**

**10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness.**

**11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

Now the next thing I want us to look at is something that surprised me because of its similarity to this morning's text. You recall that when we were going verse by verse through **Hebrews**- we ran across a very interesting Promise in **Hebrews 13:5** that many people quote today that says:

... **"I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"**

But as we studied that Promise of God- we found out that there were attributes that came with that glorious Promise that makes that Promise to be either true or false in our own individual lives. Please turn with me to read about that in **Hebrews 13:1-5**:

**1 Let love of the brethren continue.**

**2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.**

**3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.**

**4 Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed *is to be* undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

**5 *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"***

Simply quoting the Promise that is at the end of verse 5- without seeing the connections of that Promise to the attributes listed in verses 1-5a- is an utter waste of time because it undermines what this Promise is really all about. God is not saying to people that He is with them no matter what they do or how they live their lives- that is *not* what God is saying here at all. God is not saying that He will never leave us so that we may now have confidence to love money and commit adultery and engage in homosexual activity and dishonor the marriage bed, and so that we can now live completely self-centered and discontented lives.

No, the writer of **Hebrews** is saying to us here that precisely because we are trusting in that wonderful Promise of God in verse 5- that God will never leave us nor forsake us- that we will now live our lives in such a way that emulate verse 1-5 and we will:

- ✓ Let brotherly love continue
- ✓ Not forget to entertain strangers
- ✓ Visit the prisons
- ✓ Honor marriage and not engage in sexual sins
- ✓ Not love money and be content with that which God has already provided

In other words- by doing those things- we *prove* that we are, in fact, trusting in the Promise that God will never desert (leave) us nor forsake us. But since that is true- then the flip side is that if we do *not* let brotherly love continue, if we forget to entertain strangers, if we are so self-absorbed with our own problems that we do not visit the jails to comfort those who have been imprisoned for the Gospel's sake, if we do *not* honor marriage, if we engage in sexual sins that the Bible condemns, and if we *do* love money and if we are covetous and we pursue satisfaction in life by the accumulation of money and the stuff that money can buy- and if we are *not* content with what God has already provided- then we are proving beyond any doubt at all that we do *not* truly trust in the Promise that God will never desert us nor forsake us. That is what the writer of Hebrews is teaching here.

He and John and Luke are all teaching us that correct belief in God's Promises always leads to correct living according to God's Principles, and that disbelief in the Promises of God always leads us to us taking the bull by the horns and doing what is right in our own sight and the tell-tale sign that that ungodliness is going on in our lives is these 5 signs of **Hebrews 13:1-5**.

Now what was fascinating for me was to find that the exhortation by John the Baptist in **Luke 3** to be the very same as the exhortation by the unknown writer in **Hebrews 13**.

Notice that all the exhortations that John gave to those who came to him and asked, "*How should we now live now that we have trusted in God's Mercy for Salvation*" have to do with money and possessions. For example- look at **Luke 3:14**:

**Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages.**

The " **Do not take money from anyone by force**" part- I understand; The " **or accuse *anyone* falsely**" part- I get that too. But what in the world does "**be content with your wages**" have to do with trusting in the free Mercy of God for eternal life? This sounds just like **Hebrews 13:5**, where the writer says:

***Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have;***

And then in **Luke 3:19&20**- Luke tells us that one of the other issues that John addressed was fidelity in marriage:

**19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,**

**20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.**

You see, King Herod was living in an adulterous relationship with his brother's wife, and John the Baptist had clearly rebuked him for it- and for that rebuke- Herod had shut John up in prison and would later kill him.

Now it is certainly no accident that again and again in Scripture the love of money and the abuse of sexual relations or the dishonoring of marriage is exposed and rebuked because these are such primal and deeply rooted forces in the human heart that they are the hardest to transform. Yet they *must* be transformed because they are not "meet" or they do not represent true repentance.

So make sure, dear friends, that your words and your actions represent somebody who has fully trusted in the free Mercy of God, and not someone who is trusting in himself and make sure that you *prove* that your Salvation is real to yourself and to others by *not* loving money, and by *not* coveting after more of this world's goods, and by *not* forgetting to entertain strangers, and by *not* forgetting to visit the jails, and by *not* dishonoring your wife or your husband.

Now let's look now at **Luke 3:10–14** again:

**10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"**

**11 And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”**

**12 And *some* tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”**

**13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”**

**14 *Some* soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And *what about* us, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages.”**

Now back in verse 8 John said,

**Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance...**

... and in verse 10 the crowds asked,

**Then what shall we do?”**

In other words- they were asking John, “*What are the fruits that are meet for repentance?*”

Now we need to remember as we look at these sample exhortations to the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers- that John is giving examples of fruits that befit repentance or fruit that is meet for repentance. In other words- John is showing the kind of fruit (or lifestyle) that inevitably grows on the tree of repentance. In other words- genuine repentance is of the nature that it produces these sorts of attributes and actions. And please keep in mind what repentance is: a turning away from reliance on human traits and works, to a complete reliance on God's Mercy for our Security and Joy and Hope.

Now please notice first the three groups to which Luke refers.

1. The multitudes or the people (**Luke 3:10**)
2. The tax collectors or the publicans (**Luke 3:12**)
3. The soldiers (**Luke 3:14**)

Now why didn't Luke mention the fishermen, or the carpenters, or the lawyers, or the politicians here? Surely somewhere in that

"multitude" there were other professions. I can think of two reasons that Luke was accomplishing by choosing these three particular groups.

First, these three groups were hostile to each other. The "multitudes" were ordinary Jewish people for the most part, but the tax collectors were viewed as greedy Jewish turncoats and traitors who used their (already despised) relation with Rome to line their own pockets and betray their own people, and the soldiers probably included pagan Gentiles, but in any case they represented the pagan Roman overlords.

And here they all are with the same question: "*What shall we do?*" So now they are all now on the same ground, and they are all needy. You see, when a person turns to rely solely on God's Mercy- he can no longer hate his neighbor. It is psychologically impossible to understand and actually *cherish* the Mercy that God has shown to us and at the same time refuse to show it to someone else. Those who consistently refuse to show Mercy to someone else only prove that they have never been truly born of the Spirit.

Therefore one of the fruits that befits repentance or the fruit that is meet for repentance is a growing and strong unity with all those who have also been shown Mercy. In other words- all who are saved love all those who are saved. Genuine repentance penetrates the ramparts that separate classes and races and cliques. Therefore, the Church of Jesus- above all other institutions on the face of the earth- should be free of cliques and classes of people which are uninviting to outsiders. Mercy makes for joyful fellowship and loving patience with each other.

The other thing that Luke does by referring to tax collectors and soldiers is get Theophilus' ear. Remember Theophilus, to whom this Gospel Account was written, is probably a ranking Roman official— someone like a powerful soldier or a wealthy tax agent. And Luke seems to be intent on keeping the dangers of *power* and *wealth* before Theophilus. Back in **Luke 1:50–53** Mary had said, for example,

"God's *mercy* is on those who fear him . . . He has put down the *powerful* from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the *rich* he has sent empty away."

And now Luke describes what John has to say to the *rich* tax

collectors and *powerful* soldiers. And by doing this- he has Theophilus' attention. And I pray that Luke also has our attention as well. So just what *does* change when a tax collector and a soldier stops relying on his money and his power and his prestige and his status in life and starts relying fully on God's Mercy for forgiveness and hope? Let's see.

Let's list the three exhortations that John gives to the three groups. Here is his exhortation to the multitude:

**Luke 3:11b**

**...The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.**

And here is what John said to the tax collectors:

**Luke 3:13b**

**... Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.**

And here is what John said to the soldiers:

**Luke 3:14b**

**... Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages.**

... in other words- "*Don't shake down anybody or extort money by false accusations and be content with your wages.*"

Now when you think of all the hundreds of exhortations John *could* have given (and may have given) and all the exhortations Luke *could* have recorded- it is amazing that in all three cases- John refers to their possessions: their things and their money.

Now this is a theme that we are going to see again and again and again all throughout this Gospel Account (and remember, it is part of the genuine *Good News*), and you will find this same theme running the entire length of the 66 Books of Scripture:

**Genuine Faith in God, true reliance on God's free Mercy, absolute Hope in God's Promises- radically *changes* how we handle our Money, our Possessions, and our Persons.**

And this is fundamental to Christianity- dear friends. Jesus put it like this in **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 devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

The Apostle Paul said it like this in **1Timothy 6:6-11**:

**6 But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.**

**7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.**

**8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.**

**9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.**

**10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

**11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.**

Now I fully realize how unpopular preaching like this is. And I also fully realize how radical preaching like this seems to be in a pagan American culture that lusts after more and more, and I also fully realize how silly this sounds next to the great mega churches and the famous television preachers and the bestselling authors who are continuously crying out that gain is godliness and that the true measure of spirituality is the amount of possession you have. But I want you to know that I am not attacking anybody- I am simply preaching the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ and I am simply endeavoring to be found faithful in teaching you that the love of money is the root of all evil, and that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

I tell you that we live in the day of the great falling away and you can go to the average Church in America in the 21st Century and you can go every Sunday and stay there for 40 years and never hear one sermon on the evils of money. But if God will be merciful to me- you won't come here three weeks until you hear me say to you that if you



love money- you are not saved, that if you covet after this world's goods- you are sinning, and if you believe that money is a sign of God's favor on you- to the point that you believe that more money equals more favor- you are deceived.

The only reason why we don't hear about this more often in our day, dear friends, is the sad reality that most ministries have completely abandoned their God-given duty to warn God's people about this sin and the intoxicating effect that money has on people and the deadly effect that money has on their walk with God.

I know what the famous television ministries are teaching, and I am aware of what the bestselling books say- but I want to be faithful to the God Who saved my wretched soul to warn you of the horrible and the devastating effect that money plays in the life of believers- and I am as serious about this as I have ever been about anything in my life. More people have had their lives ruined by money than by crack cocaine. There have been more divorces over money than adultery, and there is more sin and more evil done in this world over money, more women selling their bodies, more children exploited, more men losing everything they own over money- than everything else in this world combined.

You don't know five people who can resist the temptation to get prideful and arrogant when they come into great sums of money, and I will tell you straight up that if you believe that if you could only get more money than all your troubles would end- you are blind and you have forgotten that you were not purchased with money or with gold or with silver- but you were purchased with the precious Blood of Jesus.

I tell you we need a revival, dear friends, not of whooping and hollering, not of falling on the floor and acting like the Church of Jesus is an insane asylum- but we need a revival where God's people once again become genuinely content with those things that God has already given to them and stop lusting after more.

Jesus made a very profound statement in **Luke 12:34** when He said:

**... where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

You can tell where a man's heart is resting by the way he handles his money and by the attitude he has toward his possessions. If his

heart is resting in the Mercy of the all-sufficient God- then he will have the lifestyle that John is exhorting here in verses 10–14.

Now I want you to notice the great difference between the exhortation that John gave to the crowds on the one hand, and to the tax collectors and soldiers on the other. The crowds are told *to give away* part of what they have: if you have clothing and food and someone you can help doesn't- then share it.

But the tax collectors and soldiers are told *not to take* more than what they are supposed to. John told them- "Be content with what you have". Now the reason for this difference is that when addressing a crowd- you don't know what the *specific* professions represented and the temptations that go with them are- so you aim at the general opportunities for compassion and benevolence where *all* of us can bear the fruit of sacrificial generosity.

But when you are addressing a specific profession that is notorious for a specific abuse- like tax collectors or soldiers- then you put your finger right on it and show them that that kind of life is not meet for repentance.

The temptation was the same for both professions, namely, to use their power to indulge their love of money by exploiting other people.

But just *why* is this kind of behavior contrary to humble reliance on the Mercy of God? Two reasons:

1. Hankering after more money reveals an insecurity and discontentment that you don't have if you are stretched out like a little baby in the arms of your Father's mercy. Remember **Hebrews 13:5**, "**be content with what you have, I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.**"
2. The other reason that exploiting others to get more money is contrary to reliance on God's Mercy is because it is unmerciful. If we really trust in God's Mercy to save us and help us at all times, then we *value* mercy and we will *cherish* it. But if you really "*love* mercy" (**Micah 6:8**), then you will *live* Mercy. Just as surely as cats have kittens and dogs have puppies- the children of God will have Mercy. And they will have mercy with their money.

And so, negatively, the fruit that is meet for repentance is the refusal to exploit anyone to get more money or more things. And, positively, the fruit that is meet for repentance is the willingness to give of our food and clothing and money to those who have need.

Now I close with two guidelines for giving.

1) Whenever we renounce anyone's pleas or refuse to meet any need that we see, we must be able to say honestly: I am refusing because of the great Love God has for me and because I delight so much in His Mercy. If you can't say that honestly- then give.

2) Of all our money and possessions we should be able to say: I retain possession of this because of how much worth *God* is to me. And if you cannot say that- then you shouldn't keep it.

Now this kind of living will require a great deal of thought and prayer and openness to change. So let us all commit today to struggle over this together in the months ahead until we all find that kind of lifestyle which signals to the world that we no longer trust in Man or the things that money can buy- but that our treasure is in truly Heaven and that we bring forth fruit that is meet for repentance.

Let's come and pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.