

Poverty and Prosperity III

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Date: 24 December 2011

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- [0 : 00] It did not occur to me until it was already too late last week that I posed a situation in the message that I brought you on poverty, and then I did not develop it or finish it. I guess I just left it kind of dangling there.
- And I have been accused of being a lot of things, but a great organizer is not one of them. And I've always had difficulty organizing my material in order to bring it and make it come across in the most coherent way.
- That has never been one of my gifts, and I just kind of sometimes wander all over the place. And I did some of that last week, too. So the incomplete concept that I developed was the posing of a problem.
- If you were here last week, you may recall it. And we were talking about the failure of masculinity as being one of the principal contributors to poverty.
- And I won't go into that any further other than to say if you're interested in the content, last Sunday's message is available on the compact disc in the back there.
- [1 : 14] Feel free to pick up a copy. But I did pose a situation that the husband is the head of the wife and that she is to be in loving submission to his loving headship.
- And yet this does not preclude the possibility of there being real, honest disagreements between husband and wife regarding certain issues. So what are they to do in a case like that?
- I suppose there are some. I'm sure there are some. Sadly, sadly to say, I'm sure there are some that the husband would just say, well, I'm in charge here. I'm the boss.
- You do as I say. That's it. End of argument. And there are men like that. There are a lot of men like that. There are even some Christian men like that who would go to such a ridiculous extreme as that in their interpretation of Scripture.
- But a man, a husband who just rides roughshod over his wife's ideas and opinions and concerns is an absolute fool.
- [2 : 26] Because femininity has a perspective that masculinity does not have. And you really need that to complement the masculinity.
- It is a blending of these two. It is not just one dominating the other. Husband is not to be a bully or a master or to throw his weight around and constantly remind her who's in charge.
- And Scripture says, you know, if there's any verse that these guys have committed to memory, it's wives, submit yourselves to your own. And they know that one. But they need to know with equal clarity, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.
- So when occasions arise and there is an honest, clear difference of opinion on an important issue as to which way to go, maybe it has to do with child rearing.
- Maybe it has to do. Well, let's just pose a hypothetical. And I've done this before because some of you can identify with it. And the hypothetical is not at all far-fetched. Husband has an opportunity for a job transfer and a significant promotion.

[3 : 49] But it is going to require the uprooting of the family and moving to Iowa in order to do that. He is, of course, all excited about it and is ready to move next week if possible.

But the wife is very reluctant and just not excited about it at all. And as he tells her what the possibilities are and the promotion and how much more money it's going to mean and how it will sweeten their retirement package and all of that, she's thinking about uprooting the kids, leaving family, leaving familiarity and all the rest of it to go off to a place that they're not at all familiar with and start all over again.

And she's not inclined to do that. So she lets him know that she is not in favor of that. What are they going to do?

Now, usually what happens, usually what happens, even in a Christian marriage, is whichever one has the more dominant personality usually gets their way.

Because they just argue the other one down and they finally just give up. But whenever there is a real difference of opinion and an argument between a husband and a wife, and I've said this before, but it bears saying again, there is a contest of wills and the husband wins.

[5 : 17] You both lose. You need to understand that. If the wife wins, you both lose. You've got to win together.

That's what marriage is all about. So when you are confronted with situations like that, who gets their way? And some would just come steamrolling in. Well, you know, the husband is the head.

He's supposed and she's supposed to do whatever. He is supposed to give every thoughtful consideration and kindness and seriousness to her point of view.

The worst thing he could do is think to himself, well, she's just a woman. And I hate that word just. She's just a woman. What does she know?

Well, Buster, she probably knows as much as you do. And in a lot of areas, she knows more than you do. So you need to respect that and not dismiss it. And when you have legitimate differences about serious issues that you don't agree on, I think the sanest thing that you can do is delay a decision.

[6 : 29] And both of you need to pray about it. And I think you ought to argue your case. And I'm all for arguing. And you know, I've heard me perhaps make a distinction between arguing and quarreling.

When you argue, you do not lose your temper. You do not call each other names. You do not put each other down. When you argue, you simply make your case.

You set forth the strongest points that you can muster for your position. Just as a lawyer would argue a case before the Supreme Court.

He's not throwing a tirade or anything like that. He is systematically setting forth what he feels are the strong points for his case. A wife ought to do that.

And a husband ought to do that. And they ought to sit down together and prayerfully go over the pros and cons. Well, if we do move, this is what it's going to mean. These are all the positives that we can think of.

[7 : 28] And here are all the negatives that we can think of. And then you pray about the thing. And you commit it. And you ask the Lord to reveal to you which way you ought to go. Now, the plot thickens.

Because your boss has told you, if you want to take this job and you want this promotion, I've got to know by the middle of next month. Otherwise, it's going to go to somebody else.

So give me your answer. By the middle of July, yes or no. Now, it becomes crunch time. Now, what are you going to do? You still are poles apart.

She doesn't want to move and he does. Who's going to win this thing? You need to win together. But if it comes right down to the wire and neither has come over to the other person's side, it's his call.

It's his call. Well, why should it be his call? Because God said so. That's it. It should be his call. However, he needs to really be sure of his grounds.

[8 : 45] And if he understands the importance of making that call, he is going to want to be doubly sure that he is doing the right thing.

Because when a fellow goes into an important area and he knows his wife's heart and mind is not in it, that in itself should give him real pause.

I'm not saying, oh, you're caving in and letting her wear the pants. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying you need to have a respect for her opinion and her ideas, even if you don't agree with him.

Because you know what? She just might be right. You might be wrong. And once it becomes the man's call, because that's what leadership and headship is, he should make it not in a gloating way, but with great sobriety and great seriousness.

And you swallow hard and you say, well, Lord, I know she's not with me on this and I wish she were, but I really believe this is what you want to do. And this is the way I'm going to play it.

[10 : 00] And you go ahead and you also take responsibility for what comes out of it. Now, wifey, I have to inject this.

If it doesn't turn out right. And it appears to have been a bad move. Don't you say it.

Don't you say it. I told you so, but you wouldn't listen. You don't have to say it. He's got it right up here in his frontal lobe.

And he's just hoping that you will not emasculate him by saying it. So throw him a crumb of kindness and forego the I told you so.

Because he already knows you're thinking that. And you know what this will do? This will just help him to pay more attention the next time there's an important decision that comes up.

[11 : 00] So I just wanted to inject that because I didn't want to leave it dangling with an unresolved kind of situation. But if at all possible, delay the decision as long as you can.

And then if it comes down to where you have to make it, it's the husband's call. Because that's what headship is all about. So any husband who dismisses his wife's ideas or suggestions out of hand is foolish.

He will be wise to give every careful consideration to her offering. Because God has given some qualities to femininity that he did not give to masculinity.

And women can see things and sense things that a guy doesn't pick up on. And a man who is wise will capitalize on that and profit from it.

And I would just add to that, while you are doing that and carrying on that kind of a relationship before your children, that is a real teachable moment.

[12 : 10] The kids really pick up on that. The greatest favor that any husband and wife, the greatest gift that any husband and wife can give to their children is to let your children see that you love each other deliriously.

You can't give them any greater gift than that. But we're not talking about that. We're talking about poverty. And poverty and prosperity.

And I've just got some loose ends that I'd like to tie together, if we may. In three of the four Gospels, talking about John 12 and Mark 14 and Matthew 26, Our Lord uttered these words, The poor you have with you always.

That was a statement that Christ made in response to a lavish expenditure of an asset. This was costly spikenard and perfume. And Jesus said when they were criticizing her for doing this, Well, why?

What this waste, this Mary of Bethany, as far as we know, it was Martha's sister, Mary, took this costly ointment, spikenard, and poured it out on the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

[13 : 36] And self-righteous Judas spoke up and said, Well, why wasn't this sold? It would have been worth 300 pence and we could have given the money to the poor. And John goes on and tells us that Judas did not say that because he was concerned about the poor.

He said that because he was a thief and he bore the bag. That simply means that Judas was the treasurer for the Twelve. And when people would make contributions to the mission efforts of Jesus and the Apostles, they would give the money to Judas and he would take care of it.

Well, Judas was skimming money off the top and that would be money that he would not have an opportunity to steal from.

That was the only reason he offered that criticism. But Jesus made an extraordinary statement in response to that. He said, Let her alone. Don't bug her.

She has anointed me to my burial. I am confident that no one in his hearing presence had any idea what he meant by that.

[14 : 51] They didn't have the foggiest idea that he literally meant that. But his burial was really just a couple of days away.

And this spikenard was a funeral perfume that was put upon the body to stave off the putrefaction and the odor that comes from decomposition.

This was something that was just used prolifically even in the last couple of centuries, particularly in Europe.

As strange as it is to us, Europeans a couple of hundred years ago didn't take very many baths. Not even royalty. But they used a lot of perfume.

And that would mask some of the body odors. Today we'd just as soon take a shower and apply a little bit of Right Guard or something like that. And it does miracles. It makes us bearable to be in one another's presence.

[15 : 57] But years ago, they didn't do that. They didn't make use of showers and bathing like we do today. But they used a lot of perfume. And it was expensive. And it was imported from different places.

And they used it to embalm bodies. And for the simple reason that it would hold down the odor of decay. And Jesus said that she has anointed me preparation for my burial.

And it was a very costly proposition too. And then he made this statement. The poor you have with you always. When Judas complained and said, we could have gotten 300 pence for this and have given money to the poor.

And Jesus said, you'll always have the poor with you. You'll never run out of poor people. But me, you will always have. And I think it is really, really significant that Jesus didn't say, you will always have the poor with you.

But you shouldn't. Because you ought to make it your goal in life to eliminate poverty. But he didn't say that. And for very good reason. Poverty and prosperity are the products of choices that people make.

[17 : 11] Good choices. Bad choices. We are all endowed with this wonderful thing that God has given us called volition.

And it means the power to make choices. The power to render decisions. Good ones and bad ones. And we are all responsible for the decisions we make.

And all of our decisions produce consequences. Some good and some bad. If you make a bad decision or a bad investment, you usually have a bad consequence.

It might even be something like bankruptcy. Because you took this gigantic risk in an effort to make bucks of money. But the thing fell through and you end up broke.

Well, that's the result of a decision that you made. And those are the consequences that come from it. And sometimes there are so many things involved in the mix that it's just really difficult to sort it all out.

[18 : 15] Sometimes you make decisions to work hard and to be frugal and to look for the best bargain on what it is that you're trying to buy.

And you do the best you can to make yourself the best person you can. And you try the best you can to contribute to the company that you're working for so as to enable them to make money and make everybody look good.

And a lot of times it's just making a decision to do your job and do it really well. I remember hearing about a couple of guys standing around and they were talking about their future with this company.

And this one guy was just promoted to vice president of the firm. And he had been there less time than three or four of the other guys and was promoted ahead of them.

And here now he's a vice president. And one guy walked up to him and slapped him on the back and said, You sure are one lucky dog. And the guy turned to him and says, Well, you can call it luck if you want to.

[19 : 25] But all I know is the harder I work, the luckier I get. And that ought to be a clue. It is industry, labor. It is putting yourself into the task and doing the job the way it needs to be done and doing it better than anybody else.

Those are decisions that you make. And they come from inner motivation. You have to have some drive. And sometimes that too gets mixed up.

I can't think of the name. I didn't even see the movie, but I saw some clips of it on television. Where this guy in a tycoon in a big Wall Street scene made the statement, greed is good.

How could anybody possibly think that? Greed is good. How could you possibly justify that? Well, it's quite easy, really. Especially if you're of a secular mindset. Greed is a motivator.

Greed causes people to do things. Greed causes people to take risks. It's greed that causes people to gamble. Because they hope to enrich themselves with little investment.

[20 : 41] So greed can be a real motivating factor. And greed can be a real downside of American capitalism.

Because let's face it. These companies go into business to make money. Is there something wrong with that? No. There's nothing wrong with that. Is there something wrong with wanting to better yourself or improve your lot?

Or increase your financial standing for your retirement? Is there something wrong with that? No. No. Not at all. But it is possible to get to the place where you are so motivated by greed.

Greed. That you'll take advantage of insider trading. In order to gain it. That you'll engage in deals that are just on the edge.

Against the law. Or maybe even over the edge. And how many people are there in our prisons right now. Who are there because they were motivated by greed.

- [21 : 50] Greed can be a very destructive thing. And it needs to be separated from a desire to enhance or improve one's lot. Which is certainly legitimate. There's nothing wrong with wanting a larger house than what you have.
- There's nothing wrong with wanting a newer car than what you have. It all depends on what you are willing to spend by way of integrity. Honor.
- Investment of time. Etc. In order to get it. These are the factors that really come into play. I want to give you a key verse that is just so powerful. Well actually.
- I need to ferret out a few of these before we get there. So let's go first of all to Romans. And we're concerned about.
- God's interest in poverty and the poor people. And in Romans chapter 15. We'll just skip through here for a few verses.
- [22 : 50] I just want you to pick up. Pick up the Lord's attitude toward poverty. We looked at that a little bit. In a couple of sessions ago. Particularly in the Old Testament.
- But here in Romans 15. And beginning with verse 24. It would help if I got in the right chapter.
- Wouldn't it? My pages are coming out of my Bible.
- And I've got some of them. And no. I don't want a new Bible. So don't anybody buy me a new Bible. Because I know where everything is in this one. I just can't.
- I just can't find this. Oh well. What is it?
- [23 : 53] Oh. Well that's chapter. That's chapter 16 in my Bible. Oh here it is.
- Okay. I'll turn the page. Yes. Okay. Verse 24. And we'll get to 26. Paul says. Whenever I go to Spain.
- For I hope to see you in passing. And to be helped on my way there by you. When I have first enjoyed your company for a while. Paul says. I just really want to spend some time. But now. I'm going to Jerusalem.
- Serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia. Now Macedonia and Achaia are in Europe. This is crossing the Hellespont. They're in Europe.
- This is where Paul went when he saw the Macedonian vision. And went across into Europe. And these people in Macedonia and Achaia. That's another part of ancient Greece.
- [24 : 50] Have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor. Among the saints in Jerusalem. Now at about this time.
- History tells us that the area. In which Jerusalem is located in Israel. Was undergoing a severe. Recession or depression.
- There were a lot of people out of work. And one reason was because. The massive. Massive. Construction project. That Herod had underway.
- For the expansion. Of the temple area. Was all complete. And it's going to be complete. Only to be totally destroyed. Six years later.
- But with all of those. Thousands of people. Put out of work. They were all laid off. Because most of them were stonemasons. And now the work is all done. So these men are all out of work.
- [25 : 45] And they're having a real difficult time. Getting along. It's a real recession. Or a depression. If you will. And where Paul goes. Over in Europe. He tells them. About the hard time.
- That these people. Back in Jerusalem. Are having. Because of. No jobs. Unemployment. Etc. So everywhere he goes. And preaches. And establishes churches.

He tells them. About the folks back home. Where he came from. And they all feel. Empathy toward them. And they start taking up. Collections. And when Paul.

Comes by. Their church. Their assembly. And he preaches. And he stays there. For a while. They always. Give him. Money. To take back. To Jerusalem.

For the poor saints there. And. We want to send this along. With our lives. Love. And we hope. That it will help them out. And he goes on. And says in verse 27. Yes. They were pleased.

[26 : 38] To do so. And they are indebted. To them. That is. Those in Macedonia. And Achaia. That is. Europe. They are indebted. To them. That is.

The Europeans. Are indebted. To the people. Of Jerusalem. Because. For if the Gentiles. And that's the folks. In Europe. Have shared. In their spiritual.

Things. They have. Because Paul took the gospel. To them. They are indebted. To minister to them. Also. In material things. Therefore.

When I have finished this. And I have put my seal. On this fruit of theirs. I will go. On my way. Of you. To Spain. And I know. That when I come to you. I will come.

In the fullness. Of the blessing. Of Christ. So. These people. In. In. Achaia. In. In Greece. Europe. Are saying.

[27 : 31] We want you. To take this money. With you. With our love. And. Give it to the poor saints. Distribute it to the poor saints. At Jerusalem. They didn't have any welfare program. And no social security.

No retirement program. Nothing like that. Everybody that worked. Everybody that worked. As a laborer. Worked. For that day. And was paid. For that day's work.

At the end of the day. They didn't even have. A weekly paycheck. They had a daily paycheck. And if you didn't work. There was no money. At the end of the day. And. Nothing to buy food with.

Or anything else. So. These people were. They were really hurting. They didn't have any safety nets. Unemployment compensation. Didn't exist. None of those things existed. You just did without.

And these people in Europe. Said. Hey. You know. Because. Of what these people. Have done. In sending.

[28 : 26] Paul. Here. To us. With this. Incredible. Information. About the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. And. Telling us. How to have. Eternal life.

Through placing our faith. And trust in Christ. This is an incredible. Spiritual. Gift. That they have given us. The least. We can do. The very least.

We can do. Is reward. What they have given us. Spiritually. With some of our money. And that's exactly. What they did. And you know.

That's still the way. It's supposed to work today. And this is the whole basis. By the way. For clergy pay. As the pastor. Delivers. Spiritual content.

To the congregation. One of the ways. The congregation responds. Is by underwriting. The needs. And expenses. Of the pastor. That's the principle. That is established.

[29 : 20] It is the same. As the ox. That treads out. The grain. Should not be muzzled. But should be able. To eat. Of what he produces. There's some other references. To come over. To Galatians chapter 2.

And we'll just quickly. Look at God's. Attitude. Toward poverty. And suffice it to say. Whatever God's attitude. Towards poverty is.

Ought to be. The same for us. Galatians 2. And verse 9. Paul said. Recognizing.

The grace. That had been given to me. James. And Cephas. That's James. And Peter. And John. Who were reputed. To be pillars.

That is. These guys were. Some of the mainstays. Of that fellowship there. They were. Main supporters. They were reputed.

[30 : 15] To be pillars. Gave to me. And Barnabas. The right hand. Of fellowship. That we. Might. Go. To the Gentiles. And they. That is. Peter.

James. And John. To the circumcised. Or to the Jews. They only ask us. To remember the poor. The very thing.

I also. Was eager to do. I cannot interpret this. In other way. Any. Any other way. Other than seeing in this. The concern. For the needs of the poor.

As standard operating procedure. This was not. An exceptional thing. This is not. An above. And beyond. The call of duty thing. The care for the needs of the poor.

No. No. The care. For the needs. Of the poor. Is ingrained. In what the church. Is supposed to be about. First.

[31 : 11] And foremost. A local church. Is to care. About the needs. And concerns. Of its own. This. Is what. Family. Is all about. And we are a spiritual family. Family. This ought to be. Our principal concern. And Paul talks about.

The widows. Caring for the widows. And again. You've got to remember. This was before. Things like. Insurance policies. And social security.

And benefits of any kind. Even existed. They just. Didn't happen. They were foreign concepts. You. Lived on.

What you earned. And on. What you saved. And that was it. There was. No safety net. There was. Nothing behind. This is what.

[32 : 06] Made it. All the more critical. For people. In an assembly. In a church. To hang together. And Paul talks about. The widows. When he writes.

To Timothy. How. They are to be concerned. Regarding the needs. Of the widows. And. Especially. The widows. Indeed.

And the distinction. That I think. Is made between widows. And widows. Indeed. Is. Most widows. Have. Family.

Usually. Limited. Family. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. A large family. But. Very often. Family. Who can. Step up. And meet the needs.

Of the widow. Because. She no longer. Has a husband. To produce an income. To meet her. Material needs. He's gone. She's a widow. So. Family.

[33 : 02] Moves in. And takes that. Responsibility. And it never. Becomes. A responsibility. Of government. It's family.

And if she. Is a widow. Indeed. She doesn't. Have any family. They're all gone. Maybe. She had a husband.

And they had no children. So. There's no family. But. Maybe there's extended family. Cousins. And whatnot. But the point is. In a church assembly. We are to.

Pull together. We are to see to it. That. The legitimate needs. In the congregation. Are cared for. And you know. This provides.

Because it's on a lot. Smaller scale. And because it's on a lot more. Knowledgeable scale. Because you know. Each other. And you know. What needs are. You have.

[33 : 57] A built in. Opportunity. For accountability. Because. You know. Each other. And you know. What their expenditures are. And you know. What they're spending money for.

And if it's frivolous things. There can be accountability. For that. And there's nothing wrong. With that. But when you get. An impersonal. Distant.

Government. Involved. That doesn't do anything. But write out checks. And send them to people. Accountability. Is virtually impossible. There's just no way. That you can do that. It just cannot.

Function that way. And this is why. The government. Handout. Bailout. Programs. Has been. One of the greatest. Boondoggles. In American history. And it started.

Way back. In the 1930s. When there were. Real. Legitimate needs. That arose. And there were. Bread lines. And people were going hungry.

[34 : 50] And unemployment. Was terrible. And the government. I think. With good intentions. Stepped in. And tried to make a difference. And in some ways. They did. In some ways. They. Relieved the situation.

And in some ways. They exacerbated. The situation. And made it even more difficult. And I don't want to just. You know. Get down on government. But I'm saying. The biblical solution.

The biblical solution. Is for. The church. To take care of its own. But. You've got so many people. That aren't in church. You've got so many people.

That are on the peripherals. You've got so many people. That we see all the time. At the food pantry. Probably. 90% of them. Don't go to church. And aren't interested. And for various reasons.

Some of them had bad experiences. At church. Some of them. Maybe went to a church. And were put down. Or something. So. There's all kinds of reasons. For that. But they. They take themselves. Out of the loop. That could really do.

[35 : 47] The most for them. And I'm not just talking about. Giving them things. But I'm talking about. Being able. To lovingly. Lovingly. And compassionately.

Teach them. And show them. The better way. And the biblical way. Of doing things. And the biblical way. Of establishing priorities. And things like that. These. These are things.

That can be taught. And should be taught. In a congregation. But most of the people. Who have these great needs. Are nowhere. That they can get that information. They don't even know it exists. And many of them. Admittedly.

Don't want it anyway. So. There is a problem there. And what do you do. About the people. Who could. Do more. For themselves.

But they won't. Some have just fallen into a trap. Of perpetuating the poverty. Because that's what they grew up in. All they've known is.

[36 : 40] Work the system. And get whatever you can get. And they. Go from. One hand out. To another. And they have. They. They have a. A mentality. That is.

They. They think. They have it coming. The world does owe them a living. And everybody. Who has got more than I have. Owes it to me. To give me something. That they've got. Because I don't have anything.

And it may be. The reason they don't have anything. Is because. They've got a. An attitude. That prevents them. From having anything. Once again. They're not in a place. Where they can get. The kind of teaching.

Or training. That they need. That could really make a difference. Let's come over quickly. To. Second. Thessalonians. No. Let's. Let's stop.

Stop at Ephesians. Stop at Ephesians 4. Can't give you all of these. But. After.

[37 : 37] Having. Told. These people. At Ephesus. These former. Gentiles. Or former. Unbelievers. They're still Gentiles. But. Former. Unbelievers. After having.

Told them. What they now. Are in Christ. Beginning in chapter 4. He. Starts telling them. What they're supposed to do. About it. And when you come down. To verse 28. Paul says.

Let him who steals. Steal no longer. Now this is the way. Some people support. You know. It's the way. Some people support. Themselves today. We have.

All kinds of. Weird. Thefts. Taking place. There's been a whole. Whole rash of churches. In our area. That. Have had. Their. Air conditioning.

Units. Robbed. And torn up. Broken down. So that. Thieves. Could take the copper. Out of them. And. They do damage. That may cost. Several.

[38 : 31] Thousand dollars. To repair. And they get. Fifty dollars. Out of it. When they take it. And sell it. At the scrapyard. But fifty dollars. Will buy.

Ten. Hits. Of smack. And that's all. They're thinking about. See. So. We've got these kind of things going on. And. You know. There was thievery in Paul's day. Because.

Some people feel. That. Being a thief. Is better than starving to death. And if you've seen. The classic. Victor Hugo's. Les Miserables. And the story there.

Where the man. Went to prison. Because he. Stole bread. And. Real troubled times. There in Paris. Well. Paul says. Let him who steals. Steal no longer.

And I don't want any. I don't want any of this job description stuff. Of. Of Christian thieves. This is a contradiction in terms. There's no such thing as a Christian thief.

[39 : 25] Is there? Yeah. There is. Every now and then. You read about some Christian organization. That had someone. Implanted in a position of responsibility.

And over a period of years. What was it they stole? Four hundred and eighty five thousand dollars. Wow. But. And they find that this person had. Been ripping them off for years and years.

Because they were in a strategic position. And you know something? They're Christians. Oh. No Christian could do that. Oh.

Honey. Wake up. And smell the coffee. Will you? Christians are capable of. Every kind of. Meanness. And nastiness. That unbelievers. Are capable of.

David. Proved that. Didn't he? You still have an old nature. You can still be guilty of stealing. And Paul is checking that here. He says. Listen. If you've been accustomed to stealing your way through life.

[40 : 24] Knock it off. Stop it. You don't have that option anymore. Let him who stole. Steal no more. But. Rather let him labor. Oh.

Labor. That sounds like sweat. Who wants to do that? Only fools work. No. It's only fools who don't work.

Paul says. Let him labor. Performing with his own hands. What is good. And why should he do that? Boy. Look at the rest of the verse. In order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

And you know where that begins? Begins with your own family. That's why a husband goes out and goes to work. And brings home the bacon. So his family can be supported.

And Paul said. If a man. If a man does not care. For his own family. He's worse than an infidel. I mean this is first grade stuff.

[41 : 29] This is life 101. You care for the needs of your family. And if you don't do that. If you can't do that. That's different.

But if you can do that. And don't do that. You're worse than an infidel. Let it not be named among you. So.

We put an emphasis on caring for our family. And meeting their needs. And so on. And. Values. Sometimes this gets very complex. Values come into play. We tell our kids.

Look. You need. You need to go to college. Why do I need to go to college? So. If you go to college. You can get. A good job. Or a better job.

Than you would be able to get otherwise. Because. When you go to college. You take on to yourself. Additional information. It's called education.

[42 : 22] And this additional information. Will help you. Make. More. Intelligent. Choices. Remember. It's all about decisions.

Making choices. Because poverty. Self-subverts. licensed mad belief. Determined by the choices people make or the people that others make for you, as in the case of children.

And you need to go to school and get an education so you can get a good job, so you can make more money. Why do I need to make more? So you can buy more stuff. That's why you need more money.

So you can get more stuff. So you can buy a bigger house. So you can have a finer automobile. So you can take those expensive vacations. That's why you need to go to college.

That's all wrong. That's all wrong. Is there anything wrong with vacations? Nope. Bigger cars? Nope. Bigger homes? Nope. But that's not to be the basis for our labor.

[43 : 23] We are to labor so that we'll have something to give to those who are in need. That is the supremest of all motivations.

But let's face it. Most of it is so that I can get what I want. And that's what drives us.

And that's back to the greed is good thing again. This is the only real biblical motivation. Is that we labor and we work so that we can meet the needs of others.

That's wonderful. And for those who won't, well, the last one is in Thessalonians. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. And this sounds really harsh.

Sounds unkind. Some would say lacking compassion. Well, is it? Second Thessalonians 3, verse 6.

[44 : 30] Now we command you, brethren. In other words, note the severity of this. Paul isn't saying, I'd like to make a suggestion.

He's saying this is a command. This is a no-nonsense thing. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life.

Now, you don't need to do this if he's not a brother. Because if he's not a brother, you don't have any right to expect any better behavior from him if he's not a brother. But if he's a brother, if he claims to be a believer, you stay aloof from him if he leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you've received from us.

This is a profligate individual who goes out carousing and who knows what sleeping around and bringing disgrace upon the name of Christ in a local congregation.

Paul says, you isolate that guy. You don't have anything to do with him. You ignore him. You don't have fellowship with him. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example because we, that's Paul and the missionary team that was with him, we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you.

[46 : 02] Nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it. We didn't just automatically show up at mealtime every day as a bunch of moochers.

But with labor and hardship, we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you.

What an incredible attitude. Listen, Paul says, we insisted on pulling our own weight. We're not going around with our hands out expecting somebody to give us things all the time.

We're willing to work for it. And by the way, that's really the only way you can honestly enjoy it is if you worked for it.

Not if somebody else worked for it and gave it to you. But because we do not have the right to this, not because we do not have the right to this, because he did.

[47 : 09] And he recognized that. But in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. This is amazing. Here's what he's saying. Look, we wouldn't take any money from you, although we were entitled to it.

We were entitled to it. The principle says the ox is not to be muzzled that treads out the corn. The laborer is worthy of his hire. We would not have been cheating you if we had taken money from you for our services.

But we didn't do that. And the reason we didn't do that is because we wanted to go the extra mile not to give anybody any occasion to think that we were just ripping them off and taking advantage of them because of our position.

We were entitled to it, but we were going to forego that. And we worked and labored right along with everybody else so that we could pull our own weight so that nobody would say, yeah, well, yeah, these missionaries, they're just in it for the money.

And I'm sure there are people who think that. And you know something? There probably are some missionaries who are in it just for the money. I hate to say that.

[48 : 23] And I'm sure that there are preachers who are in pulpits just for the money. For even when we were with you, verse 10, we used to give you this order.

I love this. Love this. Paul said, we made it a point to express this when we were with you. We used to give you this order. If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.

Simple as that. Oh, you can't do that. The man might be hungry. Good. Hunger can be a wonderful motivation. Get out and get a job. Go to work.

But I know when to work for minimum wage. Okay. Go hungry. If you don't want to flip burgers, you're not going to eat any burgers. It's as simple as that.

Now we've got bleeding hearts that look upon us. Oh, it's terribly unfair. Terribly unkind. Lack in compassion. Nonsense.

[49 : 26] But here is where the government has its problem. They are not in a position to make meaningful demands and accountability of people because they don't have the wherewithal.

There is no way they can do it. So they are probably the very least equipped to really resolve the problem.

All they can do is write out checks and send them. And the idea being, you know where this money is coming from.

And that means you ought to know who to vote for the next time you go to the polls. And we've got that kind of situation going on big time.

And it has for a long time. And there's no likelihood that it's going to quit anytime soon. Both parties, both parties know how to politicize these things. We've got an issue going on now.

[50 : 26] I don't want to wax eloquent on this. I'm just about quick. Hang up. So stay with me. But we've got a situation right now. The immigration thing. What have we got?

Twelve million that we know of illegals in this country. People that are here illegally here. What are you going to do about these people? And the standard line is, well, you can't deport twelve million people.

Well, you can start. It'd take a long while to do it, but you could start. And that's what we're supposed to be doing all along.

And yet, both the Republicans and the Democrats are both scared to death that the other party is going to find some way to ingratiate those illegals to their party and their cause so that they will be able to count on their vote come election time.

The Democrats are scared to death. The Republicans are going to be able to take advantage of the immigration policy. And vice versa. They are equally culpable in this.

[51 : 40] And that's why we've got no solution right now. And there won't be a solution until one party with the power is able to push the thing in the direction they want. And then whatever the consequences of that will be, we don't know.

We'll just have to wait and see. But it's a shame that so much of this stuff is politicized. And it is because politics is all about power. It is who is in office because if you're not in office, you can't set the agenda.

But if you're in office and many of the people in both parties have a messianic complex. The country needs me. I'm the only one with my kind of a position that can do anything that is meaningful.

Therefore, I have to do whatever I have to do in order to get elected because the country vitally needs me. And there are the Republicans and Democrats that both have this messianic complex.

And it's just part of the human ego. That's the way it is. I'm already five minutes over and I'm not going to open it for Q&A.; But I'll tell you what I'll do.

[52 : 49] You come up with any questions or comments that you would like. Feel free to drop them in the offering box. And we won't deal with them next Sunday because our congressman is going to be here.

What a follow up you've got here, Jim. What a follow up. But the week thereafter, we'll try to get some time and attention to any questions that you may have.

But I am looking forward to a new series that we're going to develop on the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. And that will begin real soon in July.

So pray with me, would you please? Father, we realize that much of what we've had to say this morning has been convoluted and perhaps even difficult to follow.

But we trust that there were principles in it that were shared that need to be embraced by everyone who names the name of Christ because they are so clearly set forth in Scripture.

[53 : 46] Thank you for the patience of these people and for their receptivity to the word. Anything we trust that might have been offered from the flesh, we want it to pass away and come to naught.

And whatever has been sealed by your spirit, we pray that we'll be able to contain it and maintain it and use it in the time to come. We bless you for this occasion to be together in Christ's name.

Amen.