

The Love of Money 2

- Too stern...website confusion (only one Stephen Armstrong in eternity)
- Last week I presented a teaching on the sovereignty of God over our finances
 - I promised you that it would be merely the first of two parts on this subject
 - And that this week I would move more in the direction of health, which I will
 - I also said I would address more specifically the issue of the teachers who are peddling so many false and unbiblical perspectives on both these topics
 - And as always, I will try to capture some aspect of what the Bible has to say on God's sovereignty in this area by relying on a passage of scripture that illustrates these truths
 - And as usual, I want to repeat my disclaimer concerning my treatment of this topic – I don't intend to teach everything the Bible has to say concerning the sovereignty of God and money or health
- Since this is a Part 2 of sorts, I need to briefly revisit where we left off in last week's teaching. In fact, I want to pick up at the end of the parable we read last week, in Luke 16
 - Jesus had just given a short parable about a poor manager soon to be fired, who shrewdly finds a way to make good use of money he was about to lose anyway
 - He turned this money into favor among the men who did business with him so that some might be willing to help him once he lost his job
 - Christ compliments the man not on his poor management, but for knowing how to make the most of the passing wealth of this world
 - Then Christ makes the stunning comparison to believers, teaching us to use the fleeting wealth of this world to make eternal friends

- In other words, just like the manager who turned his worthless unpaid bills into true gain, Christians should use the worthless wealth of this world to build up treasure in heaven
 - And if we truly recognized the perishable nature of this world's wealth, we would never hesitate to use it for the gain of eternal riches
 - Consider Christ's words at the end of that parable

[Luke 16:10](#) ¶ “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

[Luke 16:11](#) “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

[Luke 16:12](#) “And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

- Remember the words of Christ in Matt....

[Matt. 13:44](#) ¶ “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

- As I ended last week, I challenged you to consider what it would take for you to live a life that truly reflected Jesus' teaching in this parable
 - What would it take for all of us to give no regard for our earthly wealth, instead focusing out attention on eternal riches
 - In a word, trust – trust in God to provide for your needs here while you spend you time and resources seeking His kingdom and His righteousness
 - What would our church and our world look like if all Christians were taught this and followed it – we would look as radical as Christ Himself looked
 - And maybe we would have as great an impact as He had
- Now, at various times through this lesson both last week and this week, I referred to our giving of our resources (wealth) and our effort (service)
- So I think it's time I transitioned to the second part of this topic – God's sovereignty over issues of health and the body
 - Spiritually speaking, how should we view our bodies and our health then?

- How does our health and our desire that our body function properly relate to God’s sovereignty? And how is it connected to the issue of wealth?
- Well, as always, we need to begin by establishing the basic principles established in God’s Word?
- God gives life, to every man and woman
 - Moreover, He establishes the length of that life

[Job 14:1](#) ¶ “Man, who is born of woman,
Is short-lived and full of turmoil.

[Job 14:2](#) “Like a flower he comes forth and withers.
He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.

[Job 14:3](#) “You also open Your eyes on him
And bring him into judgment with Yourself.

[Job 14:4](#) “Who can make the clean out of the unclean?
No one!

[Job 14:5](#) “Since his days are determined,
The number of his months is with You;
And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.

- Since our days are determined, the number of our months is with God
 - God has determined the number of our days in this world
 - Some might read this and unknowingly confuse two related Biblical principles by assuming that this is speaking mere of God’s foreknowledge
 - In fact, it’s referring to God’s Sovereignty, specifically His providence
 - Job makes clear we’re not just talking about God’s knowing the future and thereby knowing the length of a man’s days
 - God says He has set or appointed man’s limits – in other words, He has determined, decided the limit of our days
 - Moreover, He says He will not allow us to pass that limit
 - I believe the more you consider this statement, the more radical it will become in your life

- How much time do you spend concerning yourself about how long you will live?

[Matt. 6:27](#) “And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?”

- How much effort and money do you invest in trying to lengthen your days
 - Given what we just read, how successful do you think you will be?
- If the world and lately even the church are obsessed by concerns over wealth, then I think it’s fair to say they are paranoid over the prospect of declining health and death
 - Consider the vast amounts of money and effort spent by the world to avoid death? To forestall it? Even if were possible, to avoid it?
 - But even the unbelieving world knows they can’t truly avoid death, so they do the next best thing:
 - They pretend they’re avoiding it
 - They work to look as if they were avoiding it – plastic surgery, cosmetics, etc.
 - All of it done to give the impressions of eternal youth if not eternal life - all the while in a decaying body
 - There’s a reason why cheats and con artists are commonly called snake oil salesman
 - Because the most common and most successful way to cheat people out of their money has typically come from those selling miracle cures – snake oil it was called – to a world desperate to cheat death
 - And what really drives the world to behave this way? To focus so much on preserving health and lengthening life?
 - In a word: fear
 - Fear of pain, fear of dependency, fear of rejection, fear of death and ultimately, fear of judgment
 - For though most unbelievers couldn’t articulate it or perhaps even recognize it, they are living a life driven by

fear – a fear that comes from sin and the separation it creates from God

- And of course, they should fear – for

[Heb. 10:31](#) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the **living God**.

- Though the fear should drive them to repent and confess Christ, for so many it merely manifests itself as a pitiful exercise of sticking their fingers in the dike, even as it springs more leaks and the rising waters slowly choke off the life in their mortal bodies
- Now the truly sad part to all this is how much the church has become to look like the world – just as it has in the area of wealth
 - As believers, we have no business sharing in the world’s fear

[Heb. 2:14](#) ¶ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Heb. 2:15](#) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Christ took on flesh and blood and suffered through the death process, and when He was raised up, the Father demonstrated His power over death – a power he grants to those who trust in His Son’s sacrifice
 - And by doing so, He rendered Satan powerless over Christians
 - How is Satan powerless over us? Because we no longer have reason to fear death. Because we know death brings better things, nor worse things
 - As long as someone has reason to fear death, they will be consumed by the fear of death and through that fear, Satan has control over them, a slavery Hebrews calls it
 - This is the fear that drives the unbelieving world and causes them to participate unknowingly in the schemes of the evil one
 - Their fear of death and all the insecurities it produces – insecurities over money, health, love and power – drive the unbelieving world to commit all manner of sin

- But the writer of Hebrews says Christians have no business sharing in that fear
 - We are freed from that kind of slavery
 - Simply put, we have no business fearing death nor even the natural decay of this body – for we should look forward to its replacing
 - So when we act as the world does, fearing death and following the same schemes as if to avoid death, we are assuming the position of a slave again – not in reality but in appearance
- It's also on the basis of fear that so many false teachers have succeeded in gaining an audience
- I want to take a brief moment to address the issue of these teachers before moving to tonight's passage
 - These teachers know that their audiences fear not having enough money and they fear the approach of death
 - So these teachers tailor their messages to appeal to the ears of the world

[2Tim. 4:3](#) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

[2Tim. 4:4](#) and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

- These teachers are tickling ears – which means they are saying things we like to hear – things that appeal to our sinful fearful nature – and they avoid messages that offend or disturb us
 - They tell us that God wants to make us rich and take away all illness
 - That God must grant us our wishes if we ask Him using the right words or while we hold the right thoughts
 - Interestingly, they often avoid the preaching the hard message of the gospel because it may offend...just as Christ said it would
- Perhaps this insight will help explain their motives:
 - After he was released from prison, a very repentant Jim Bakker told this account of how his ministry came to focus on false teaching concerning prosperity:

I'd always quoted 3 John 2, saying, "Above all things God wants you to prosper." I loved that Scripture. It looks great on a TV screen when you're raising funds, and I interpreted it as God wants you to be rich. But when I got to the words of John, I said, "Now this don't make sense." So I took the word prosper apart in the Greek and found out it's made up of two words—the first word means good or well and the second road. It's a progressive word, so it's like a journey. So, here's John saying, basically, "Beloved, I want you to have a good journey through life as your soul has a good journey to heaven." It was a greeting! Building theology on that is like building the church on "Have a nice day."

I began to look up all the Scriptures used in prosperity teaching, such as "Give and it shall be given unto you." When I put that Scripture back into its context, I found Christ was teaching on forgiveness, not on money. He was teaching us that by the same measure that we forgive, we will be forgiven.

I had gotten my sermons from other people. The Bible warns about the shepherds who get their messages from each other. I think today the reason we have another gospel and another Jesus being preached is because men have gotten their sermons from each other and from motivational teaching. A lot of what's being taught today is simply motivational teaching with a few Scriptures put to it.

- That last line sent chills up my spine...consider how many churches now are willing to jump on board the latest teaching fad sweeping the country – effectively relinquishing their pulpits over to pre-fabricated sermon series designed more to sell books more than glorify God and edify believers – it's truly frightening
- While some of these teachers are truly evil men, unbelievers preying on the Body of Christ
 - But what's worse, many honest & well-meaning pastors and teachers have been impressed by the success of these false teachers and are beginning to imitate them and mimic many of their teachings
 - This is a dangerous trend, because it means not only do God's sheep have the wolves to be concerned about, but now even their shepherds themselves have begun to go astray and lead their flocks to dead ground rather than good pasture
 - Shame on all the church if we allow this decent into apostasy to go unchecked – I pray we will have the courage to be like Hezekiah, who He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah.

- Now I know some of you are probably exercising great patience with me right now
 - Because you know there is another side to this story of God’s sovereignty in health to be found in scripture, and you would be right
 - And this discussion will lead us into our passage tonight
 - Scripture does give clear instructions concerning the need to respect our bodies and to do so with reverence
 - There are many well-known verses:

[1Cor. 6:18](#) Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

[1Cor. 6:19](#) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

[1Cor. 6:20](#) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- Similar things are said in 1Cor 3 and 2Cor 6

[Rom. 6:11](#) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[Rom. 6:12](#) ¶ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

[Rom. 6:13](#) and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

- So, obviously the condition of our bodies is not meaningless to God
 - He wants our bodies to be respected and honoring to God
 - At times we know He desires to heal us so that He may receive glory for his compassion and mercy
- But so often our theology in this area glosses over the details and simply runs to the conclusion that keeping our bodies healthy is one of the spiritual precepts from God, and we often cite passages like the ones I quoted to prove the point
 - But did you pay close attention to those passages?
 - Did they talk about seeking physical health, preserving physical strength or protecting the beauty of the body?

- Did they persuade us to strive for a long life ?
- Did they talk about what we should eat?
- Did they talk about health at all really?
- If you listened carefully, you noticed they all spoke about refraining from sinning with our bodies
- Paul instructs us to flee immorality, especially immorality committed with the body – sins that involve physical acts of immorality
 - God the Holy Spirit indwells us and therefore, He owns our body
 - By using our body for immoral purposes, we essentially bring the HS with us into our sin, making Him an unwilling witness to our depravity
 - So our instruction from Paul is to honor the HS presence in our bodies by fleeing immorality and using our bodies to glorify God
- Paul taught essentially the same thing in Romans, emphasizing the importance to not allow sin to reign in the body
 - But here’s the truth about what you’ll find in the Bible regarding how we treat our bodies
 - Apart from sin issues like gluttony, immorality or eating food sacrificed to idols, the scriptures say almost nothing about how we treat our bodies strictly for the purpose of health
 - Some may be tempted to raise the issue of the dietary laws given in the Mosaic Covenant
 - But of course we know as Christians, we are not bound by that law – nor does anyone I know try to keep it
 - In truth, the dietary law was like the rest of the law – a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ by demonstrating our unrighteousness
- So, we’re left chiefly with one view in scripture: we should not focus on the earthly body, but set our mind on eternal things knowing God is sovereign.
 - He has set the length of our life
 - He expects us to use our body to glorify Him

- In many of his teachings, Paul compares our bodies to the temple of God...so what was the purpose of the temple?
- To worship and glorify God
- Are you using your body to bring glory to God?
- We know we are to devote all we can in our finances to the kingdom, not storing treasure in heaven...
 - So if I were to take the Biblical perspective of bodily health, and do the same - devote my body to serving God with as just much commitment and energy as I commit my finances, what would that look like?
- And that brings us to our passage tonight, which we'll cover in two parts beginning in 2 Cor 4:5-12

[2Cor. 4:5](#) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

[2Cor. 4:6](#) For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[2Cor. 4:7](#) ¶ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

[2Cor. 4:8](#) *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

[2Cor. 4:9](#) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

[2Cor. 4:10](#) always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

[2Cor. 4:11](#) For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

[2Cor. 4:12](#) So death works in us, but life in you.

- Paul had a vitally important ministry in the early church
 - In fact, there probably isn't a man after Christ who could be considered as important to the church as Paul
 - I read one article on Paul written by an unbelieving Jewish scholar who asserted that it was more accurate to say that Paul founded the Christian church
 - And Paul knew how important his ministry would be – Jesus gave him that insight and understanding

- So if ever there were a man who could claim that preserving the health of his body was the most important thing he could do to advance the kingdom of God, it would have been Paul
 - Can't you hear Paul's words now...
 - Therefore, it is with sorrow that I must remain here in Ephesus rather than embark on such a long and difficult journey to greet the brothers in Macedonia, for I must preserve my strength so that I might minister to the saints for as many years as I am able.
 - Wouldn't that make sense to our modern view of preserving the health of the body?
 - Or the other popular view on health would have Paul saying:
 - I have this thorn in my side, but I have cast it out in the name of Jesus and because I had enough faith, God will heal me of this affliction, because He desires that all His children are free of distress

[2Cor. 12:7](#) Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

[2Cor. 12:8](#) Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

[2Cor. 12:9](#) And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

[2Cor. 12:10](#) Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- The truth is Paul lived a miserable life
 - In fact, 4 out of 5 doctors say if you do the things Paul did, you're probably suicidal
 - If there was a way to put his body in harms way, to subject it to misery, to wear it down, to undermine its health, Paul did it
 - He was stoned, he was beaten, he was jailed under the worst of circumstances,
- Our passage today begins with a sobering reminder of what true devotion to a calling requires of us

- Paul says that though he was filled with the Light of the Holy Spirit as are all Christians, it was placed inside earthen vessels
 - Lamps were often made of crud clay pots that were translucent...
 - He compares the human body to such vessels
 - The only reason those vessels have any value at all is because of what's inside them – the light and life of Christ
 - If you to find one of these vessels lying around without oil, with no way to light it, you would cast it aside – it was would worthless
- And in fact, it's God's purpose that the container for His light be weak and unimpressive, so that the light can be seen all the more clearly for what it is – the power of God
 - Look at what Paul says in 8-11
 - Our earthly body is constantly suffering for the sake of our ministry: afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down
 - But these afflictions cannot defeat us totally – because that's not their purpose
 - Instead, their purpose is something altogether different and surprising
 - We who live in Christ, Paul says, are being delivered over to these afflictions so that Christ's strength in us may be shown – so that God will receive glory
 - Who exactly is delivering us? Is the enemy delivery us to these circumstances? Does he have such control and does he want to glorify Christ?
 - No, the grammar of the Greek makes clear that the one who delivers us is the same one who is working to glorify Christ
 - It is the Holy Spirit Himself – God in other words
 - God subjects us to these afflictions, but not for the purpose of destroying us – merely to ensure our weakness is always evident – and Christ's strength is always visible
- The most convicting part of Paul's message comes in verse 12

- He says death works in us, so life works in you
 - It's a paradox, and in the Greek it was a commonly understood rhetorical technique – a comparison drawn by contrast
 - Paul says that the more faithful he and others like him are to to obey God's will and minister to the Corinthian church, the more they suffered physically
 - Yet the more they did that, the more the Corinthian church prospered spiritually in witnessing the apostles' faithfulness
 - Do you understand what Paul is saying to us here?
 - If it's not clear, hold on as we read the second part of this passage together

[2Cor. 4:15](#) For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

[2Cor. 4:16](#) ¶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

[2Cor. 4:17](#) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

[2Cor. 4:18](#) while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

[2Cor. 5:1](#) ¶ For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

[2Cor. 5:2](#) For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

[2Cor. 5:3](#) inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

[2Cor. 5:4](#) For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

[2Cor. 5:5](#) Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

[2Cor. 5:6](#) ¶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—

[2Cor. 5:7](#) for we walk by faith, not by sight—

[2Cor. 5:8](#) we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

[2Cor. 5:9](#) Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

[2Cor. 5:10](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Paul doesn't regret the abuse his body is taking for the sake of the Corinthian church, even as much trouble as he's caused them
 - He says all that he's done was for their sake and for the glory of God
 - And the fact that his body is falling apart doesn't matter one bit to Paul – because he knows who's in charge
 - And he knows that it's part of God's plan that he suffer in the work of the ministry
 - He knows that experiencing trauma to his body was necessary and part of God's plan because of how it diminished Paul's apparent strength and glorified God
 - And why is that necessary? Because he doesn't want to convert people into believers in Paul, he wants to convert people into believers in Jesus Christ
- If Paul were to have lived his life emphasizing his physical health, he would have been doing exactly the same thing as the man who stored up his material wealth on earth
 - Both would be storing their treasure on earth instead of heaven
 - Think about that...when you avoid opportunities to minister because of the discomfort it might cause or the physical stress it might produce
 - Or when you can't find time for ministry or serving in the Body because your calendar is too full with activities that grow your pocketbook or shrink your waistline – you're storing up treasure in heaven
- Consider the rest of Paul's words in v 17...
 - The affliction is light and momentary but the rewards are eternal and weighty
 - And we are willing to do such a thing because we see our circumstances with eyes for eternity – not fixated on things of this world, the temporal things of life
 - Then he says that just like our earthly money, the body we have here – this tent he calls it – is temporary and not worth holding onto

- It will be torn down and God will replace it with something eternal – something every believer should be yearning for and focused on
- And God even gave us a down payment – a pledge of that future new body in the form of the Holy Spirit
- But before we get that new body, there will be a test
 - And at the test, called the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be shown for what we did in this world with what he gave us
 - With the resources he gave us and with the opportunities to serve with our bodies in glory to Him
 - And what we Christ say to you? Why not answer that question right now for yourself?
- Which prosperity gospel are you living by right now?
 - The one that believes that we must seek wealth, pray for wealth, strive for wealth and store up our wealth so that in this world we can feel rich and satisfied?
 - The prosperity gospel that says we have to protect our health, worry over our health, demand God's healing and preservation of our life all to last possible moment so that our strength may be made known in the eyes of the world
 - The prosperity gospel taught in so many deceived churches around the world that places all the emphasis on our selfish desires and on our fleeting life in this world
- Or are you prepared to believe and to live out the true, biblical view of prosperity and health?
 - The one that trusts God to keep His word in providing for your needs
 - The one that teaches contentment regardless of what God chooses to provide
 - The one that understands that the willingness to spend the wealth of unrighteousness on the kingdom is our test of our trustworthiness with eternal riches

- The one that does not seek to protect our health and strength to our own glory, but is willing to sacrifice it for the sake of the kingdom and the glory of God
- The one that sees this world with eyes for eternity, the one that understands the sovereignty of God
- What are you prepared to believe?
 - And what are you prepared to do with what you believe?

[Psa. 90:1](#) ¶ Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

[Psa. 90:2](#) Before the mountains were born
Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

[Psa. 90:3](#) ¶ You turn man back into dust
And say, “Return, O children of men.”

[Psa. 90:4](#) For a thousand years in Your sight
Are like yesterday when it passes by,
Or *as* a watch in the night.

[Psa. 90:5](#) You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep;
In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew.

[Psa. 90:6](#) In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew;
Toward evening it fades and withers away.

[Psa. 90:7](#) ¶ For we have been consumed by Your anger
And by Your wrath we have been dismayed.

[Psa. 90:8](#) You have placed our iniquities before You,
Our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence.

[Psa. 90:9](#) For all our days have declined in Your fury;
We have finished our years like a sigh.

[Psa. 90:10](#) As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years,
Yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow;
For soon it is gone and we fly away.

[Psa. 90:11](#) Who understands the power of Your anger
And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?

[Psa. 90:12](#) So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

[Psa. 90:13](#) ¶ Do return, O LORD; how long *will it be*?
And be sorry for Your servants.

[Psa. 90:14](#) O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

[Psa. 90:15](#) Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us,
And the years we have seen evil.

[Psa. 90:16](#) Let Your work appear to Your servants
And Your majesty to their children.

[Psa. 90:17](#) Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
And confirm for us the work of our hands;
Yes, confirm the work of our hands.