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The Deceitfulness of Riches

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Series: The Parables of Scripture

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Deceitfulness of Riches

None of us likes to be deceived. There is something humiliating about it. It destroys the ego. It carries with it the connotation that the other guy outsmarted you. It indicates that someone or some thing sneaked in on your blind side and caught you off guard and made mincemeat out of you.

Professional con artists make a living out of deceiving people. Unscrupulous merchants make a tidy profit by using false advertising or sales gimmicks that make a product to be what it isn't, or a price to be lower than it really is.

I am amazed at the ads in magazines that feature a picture of one thing alongside the price of another. The fine print tells you that this would be the price of the table without legs, or this would be the cost of the car without an engine, but at a glance you think you are getting something for nothing, when in reality it is the other way around.

“AS LOW AS \$999” the ads say. But the computer for \$999 isn't the one pictured. It's the one found on page 456 in the corner of the page and was discontinued about a year ago. Oh, you can buy the case for \$999, but the computer runs about \$1,500. Deceitfulness.

Or how about those glitzy envelopes that arrive in the mail with your name in big print saying *JOHN SMITH, YOU ARE A WINNER*. You've always thought so, so you open it up. Sure enough, it says you won a million dollars. The problem is: all you won is the right to be a fool.

Deceitfulness. But it is not confined to advertising. It has become a way of life. Politicians, performers, promoters will often tell you what you want to hear, and much of the time they believe themselves. They, too, you see, have been deceived.

Much of life is bathed in deception. Very little is as it appears to be, and after a while, we begin to accept deceitfulness as a normal way of life.

Because deceitfulness is so at the heart of the spiritual battle between Satan and God, the Bible has a lot to say about the despair that accompanies deceitfulness. It can rob you of your

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joy, your perspective, and your walk with God.

This lesson is about a particular source of deceitfulness, but before we can focus on that, we must attach the wide-angle lens of Scripture to the camera of eternity and get the bigger picture. And it is, indeed, big in scope. It is big because the very issue of Satan's conflict with God hinges on whether we are under the control of truth, or are, in effect, deceived.

The Bible gives us a picture of the source of the battle in Jeremiah 17:7-10. Remember? It says this:

Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

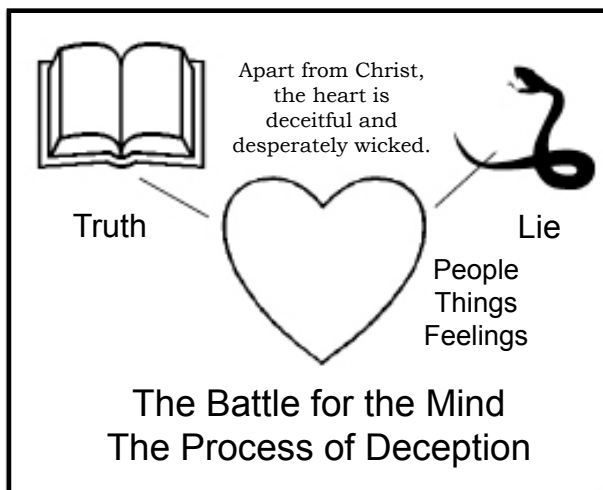
The man whose life is founded on truth will be like a tree that is constantly bearing fruit. The fruit is not the result of the tree, but of the water from which the tree gets its nourishment. So long as it drinks of that living water, its leaves are green and its fruit is both tasty and healthy.

Not everyone, however, produces such fruit. Not because they don't want to, but because of something called deceit and something called the heart. The heart, remember, is the real you. It is what you think when you think no one knows what you think. It is what you would do were there no restraints and no consequences. It is the you God sees, for though "man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7).

The heart, then, is the you no one knows but God, and our passage in Jeremiah tells us that it is "deceitful above all things". In other words, *there is nothing in the universe more easily deceived or more easily used to deceive than the heart of a man when he is not under the control of the transforming power of God.* The source of that deception is the great deceiver, Satan, and he has three basic sources of input with which to deceive the heart.

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The only antidote to his deception is Truth. And truth is only found in the Word of God. Diagrammed, it looks something like this:



The source of all deception is Satan. In Genesis 3:13, we read:

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

That word, *beguiled* is the Hebrew word נָשָׂא nasha' {naw-shaw'} It means *to deceive* or *to lead astray*. It is the same word used in II Kings 18:29, where it is translated, "Let not Hezekiah *deceive* you". It is used in Jeremiah 4:10, where we read, "Surely, thou hast greatly *deceived* this people". Satan had introduced into the world a concept called *deception*. The word literally means *to lead astray* or *to catch* or *ensnare* by *guile*. It is the opposite of guilelessness, integrity, honesty. It is an act of deception whereby a person or group is led to believe something or act on something that is not true. It is Satan's trademark. Mark it. Anytime you are deceived, Satan is involved. As the diagram shows, he primarily uses three things: people, things, and feelings to deceive.

He uses people by getting us to place our trust in them and leading them to live a lie or tell a lie or believe a lie. In the case of *things*, there are several things in Scripture that Satan uses over and over successfully. One is alcohol or drunkenness or drug

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use. He will use anything that destroys your ability to reason, so he can cause you to reason wrongfully. Proverbs 20:1 tells us:

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

One thing, then, that Satan uses to deceive, is any substance, legal or not, that distorts the mind's ability to rationally remain true to truth. He wants us to believe that we can find lasting satisfaction in a temporary high or some kind of escape from reality. But when it is over, we find, alas, that we have been deceived.

A second thing is the key ingredient to this study. Satan uses money or riches to draw men and women into a state of deception, *believing they can find lasting satisfaction in what they can earn, buy, or accumulate that is temporal in nature.* That is where we are in the parable of the sower. The passage reads:

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches,
and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word,
and it becometh unfruitful. (Mark 4:18,19)

The deceitfulness of riches. God is not saying that riches are evil. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. He gave to Job great riches. In order to teach Job principles of godliness, God took it all away. Once Job learned what God was teaching, He gave it back and then some.

Paul experienced both poverty and riches; joy and defeat. He said, "I have learned whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content". Riches are not evil, but they are a template Satan uses to tempt us to evil, and oh, so often, he succeeds. The deceitfulness of riches. It is one of those things the enemy uses to lure us off target.

The third thing he uses is *feelings*. He uses *false guilt* to lure us into legalism. He uses *false euphoria* to lure us to believe that if we *feel spiritual* God is pleased, and he uses circumstances to provoke us to believe that we are to make decisions according to either inner excitement or outward circumstances rather than the clear leading of the word of God. In each case, his goal is to deceive us, to lead us away from truth into *any other arena where we have no absolutes to govern our choices.*

Deception, incidentally, is a choice. We choose in every

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situation whether or not to allow Satan to lure us astray. Often it is by default, but that is only another poor choice. Eve chose to listen to the voice of the serpent. Adam chose to listen to Eve. Both of them chose to run when they heard the footsteps of God. They were deceived into believing lies about who God was and what God wanted. Satan was the author of it, but they made the choices. Scripture records it over and over. God tells us *not to be deceived*. When He commands something, it means 1- we have a choice, and 2- in Christ, it is possible. He never instructs us to do what He, by grace, will not or cannot do supernaturally in us. It all comes down to choice.

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. (I Corinthians 15:33)

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. (I Corinthians 3:18)

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: (I Corinthians 6:9)

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6)

Let no man deceive you by any means (II Thessalonians 2: 3)

Be not deceived. That's a commandment. Satan is coming after you. According to these passages, he wants you to let down your guard as you speak. He wants you to ignore the consequences of your choices. He wants you to be arrogant about your knowledge. He wants you to be taken in with glittering generalities. He wants you to be deceived. God's answer; Be not deceived. Let no man deceive you by any means.

Deception is a given. Your reception to the deception is a choice, and Satan is the author of every kind of deception that comes your way. In the last days, he will exercise his powers of deception to the max, and finally, his deception will be over. We read in Revelation 20:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

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And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
(Revelation 20:1-3,10)

The day is coming when Satan will deceive us no more. In this world, however, until Jesus calls us home in death or calls us into the heavenlies at the rapture, *we will be attacked day and night*. Some of those attacks will be up front, brutal, and like Job, we will reel under the force of the satanic blasts. Sickness, grief, disappointments, sowing and reaping, all will bring both spiritual blessing and physical suffering, and we will often cry out for grace.

On the other hand, however, there will be the subtleties of Satan's attempts to simply deceive us. He will appear as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He will appear as an angel of light. He will appear as the god of reason. He will do anything to paint as unreasonable the claims of Jesus Christ upon your life and mine. Rather than overtly deny the concept of Lordship, he will simply try to temper it with what he calls *reason*.

Sure, you've been bought with a price, but after all, you have your rights, he'll say. Sure, you should forsake all that you have, but all doesn't mean all, does it? And on and on it goes. It is only the same song, six millionth verse. He sang it to Eve in that garden as though he had been nominated for a Grammy award.

HATH GOD SAID?

"Hath God said", the serpent chirped,
Did He say..."Don't touch"?
Or did he simply mean, "Now Eve,
Please, don't eat too much."

"Hath God said", the devil cried
"What right hath God to tell
Any man or woman that
They'll be doomed to hell?"

"God hath not said", said Satan
(A lie man soon believed),
And when he did (And when we do)
We've simply been . . . Deceived!

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Deceived. That's what happened. Eve was deceived. And so are we, day after day after day. It was that deception Jesus was referring to when He painted that picture of soil conservation on that Israeli beach so long ago. He was talking of parables, living illustrations of spiritual reality; and he said that some of the seed of the word of God falls on soil that appears to be healthy—not too shallow, not too trodden under foot, *but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches act like weeds*, and that beautiful seed that seems so destined to produce eternal fruit *never quite makes it*. Weeds. Thorny, sticky weeds. They, like so many of Satan's infestations, are subtle, hardly noticeable. . . until, that is, they choke out the word and destroy the fruit of the Spirit.

The deceitfulness of riches. What could that mean? It means, as that diagram shows, that *things* are an effective tool to derail the agricultural express that is coming to that station near you to pick up the grain that has been multiplied from your life. There's no need for the train when there has been no grain.

The deceitfulness of riches, according to Mark 4, is capable of completely destroying the whole crop. It may only make it less desirable, but the verse says the thorns grew up, and it yielded no fruit. No fruit apparently means no fruit. Period.

So we know what deceit is, and we know where it comes from. It is the twisting of truth subtly until it ceases to be truth, and it comes from Satan....always. But Jesus, in Mark 4 and in Matthew 18 is referring to a specific kind of deceit, a specific tool Satan uses to choke the word as it begins to produce life-changing fruit in your life. It is the deceitfulness of riches.

Riches, like the fruit on that tree, are not inherently evil. They are, however, potentially dangerous. For that reason, God gave us some warnings about their potential dangers, and He gave us a spiritual counterpart to take their place. He called it the riches of His grace. Those riches had characteristics that were the exact opposite of the world's riches. *They could never be taken away, could never rust, could never decay, could never be destroyed*. Unlike the world's riches, instead of bringing great responsibility that was accompanied by the weight of heaviness, His riches would lift, encourage, carry, and overwhelm with supernatural power. Let's look at how we should look at, manage, and dispense riches, using only the Scripture as our guidebook. Be careful.

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There is a danger that as a Christian, in an effort to be a good steward and to manage your resources well, they become gods themselves, and the very management of them will consume your life, or the very stewardship of them will become so cumbersome that you will cease to see them as gifts from God at all.

Now before we begin this journey, and you begin to become haughty about those rich people, remember that riches are relative, and the principles apply *to how your riches affect you, not to how rich you are compared to someone else*. Your acquiring a used car may become much more of a source of pride to you than someone else buying a new Lexus. The issue is twofold:

- 1- How riches affect man.
- 2- How your money affects you.

And before you begin pulling the speck out of your rich brother's eye, remember how relatively rich you are compared to people in other parts of the world who have no food, no clothes, no cars, no homes, no television sets, and no hope. The issue isn't *how much money you have*. The issue is to what degree your money has you. The deceitfulness of riches is so deceitful that you don't have to be rich to be deceived. All riches qualify, and you may not own a Rolex, but your Timex may well be a stumblingblock to you. Remember: the issue is not the sin of being rich. That is not a sin. The issue is: the deceitfulness of riches, of possessions, of the relative accumulation of funds or things and how that accumulation affects you. So don't look around for someone to scorn. It is the beam in your eye and mine that we are to do surgery on.

We only have time in this lesson to begin our pilgrimage. Jesus is talking about a subtle kind of temptation that we succumb to that causes the intensity of our spiritual quest to wane, and thus become weeds among the fruit that the Holy Spirit is seeking to produce in and through us.

The key will be reminding ourselves once again about the two-kingdom world in which we live. We are living in one for another. We are residing here, waiting to live there. We will be here for a few short years, then it will be over. We will be there for all eternity. What we accumulate here, stays here. What we translate into spiritual riches goes ahead and is stored there in a robbery-proof, decay-proof environment, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal.

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That is where faith comes in. It is the evidence of things not seen. We can't feel, touch, or see those spiritual treasures. We don't get a monthly statement. We have to believe by faith that what God says is true, and that everything we leave here will burn to a crisp and everything we send ahead will be in perfect condition, stored in an eternal vault awaiting our arrival. Once again, faith is the victory. We either believe it or we don't. The degree to which we doubt that, we will be deceived, and that deception will lead us to make choices that will gradually erode our spiritual fruitfulness. Thorns will grow up in the garden of our hearts, and *we won't even recognize they are there.*

In the limited time we have in this lesson to begin, we must establish once again two basic principles, principles we know intellectually; *but those dreaded thorns have come up and they look so green, they've confused us.*

1- You really can't take it with you. Really. We all know that, but we don't live as though we know that. Riches are temporary and riches are temporal. They will perish and they will remain behind. Period. No exceptions. Scripture is clear.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. (James 1:8-11)

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Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. (Proverbs 23:4,5)

There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand.

As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

(Ecclesiastes 5:13-15)

God wanted us to be sure we understood the problem. This earth's currency won't spend in heaven, and there is no currency transfer program like there is when you go from one country to another. What you have accumulated here is plunked down at the entrance gates of eternity, and you will receive a receipt upon entering. It will read something like this:

Handled while on planet earth in 75 yrs.	\$5,456,345.00
<u>Accumulated to leave behind</u>	<u>\$344,610.00</u>
Transferable value =	\$0.00

The first two numbers will vary by the millions and the thousands, but the last one will remain the same. The amount you can take with you will be zero. *Zilch. Nada.* You may have lived in relative poverty or been considered one of the world's success stories. What you take with you will be the grand equalizer. All of your stocks, bonds, holdings, real estate, and bank accounts will add up to the same total. Nothing. Granted, you may leave them behind to help mess up your children's sense of values, or you may leave it all behind to foster one of the world's great family conflicts as long-lost cousins surface from under rocks to fight for an inheritance they had nothing to do with. Either way, just keep one thing in mind. *You can't take it with you.* You can't even take the paperwork to remind you that you had it. I can remember being in a hotel one time when the kitchen caught on fire and everyone was told to rush to the lobby. When we got there, one man had his tax returns. A woman was clutching her jewelry and her furs. We had each other, and we could not help but be amused at what people grabbed and grasped when they thought it was going to burn.

Beloved, *it's all going to burn.* Count on it. Put your money on

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it, if you will. There will be this gigantic explosion, a horrendous fire, and earth as we know it will vanish. The banks. Wall Street. The houses we poured so much money into. The cars we thought would become classics. They will have become a statue of twisted metal, a monument to the nothingness of our accumulated wealth. Mark it. God does not lie. That is the end result of all our savings and all our investments. They will go poof...end of story.

2- No, you can't take it with you, *but you can send it ahead.*

You can make investments in spiritual things by investing in lives and every cent of it will go ahead of you into the vaults of eternal safekeeping. Not one cent of it or one minute of it will lose its value or be subject to the perils of inflation. The dollar may fluctuate, but the HSC (Holy Spirit Currency) will be worth exactly as much in twenty years as it is today. It is underwritten by the FISC (Funds Indestructible, Safe in Christ). Paul wrote to Timothy

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

(I Timothy 6:17-19)

Now I know that there is probably no one reading or listening to this lesson who does not know those two things:

1- You can't take it with you.

2- You can send it ahead.

If we know that, why bother to focus on it again? Because, beloved, this lesson is about *the deceitfulness of riches*. It is about how Satan takes *even information we assume to be true*, and subtly distorts its meaning by exposure to the society in which we live, *as though that society has become the norm, rather than the clear word of God*.

I believe that the barn-builder in Luke 12 *knew he couldn't take his goods to heaven*. I believe that. That doesn't require a genius. Every one he had ever known who had died had left his goods behind and his funds behind. I don't think for one minute that Mr. Barn Builder thought he could pack it up and slip into his coffin when no one was looking and surprise God with a tidy

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bankroll as he entered glory.

But I do believe *he forgot the principle*. He knew the truth, but he was living as though it wasn't true. He could stand up in the synagogue and cry out "Preach it, Rabbi" when the subject of stewardship came up. But when it came *to living it*, he had become captive to the deceitfulness of riches.

His had been a success story. The Scripture says "His ground brought forth plentifully." God had blessed him. Be careful, God's blessings are not often temporal, but spiritual. Often He blesses us to test us, but remember *do not judge your spirituality by how wonderfully things go at work, or by how many dollars you send to the bank each payday*. God's own Son had no place to lay His head. He owned no real estate, few clothes, none of life's blessings as we call them. He had to borrow a donkey and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He didn't have a gravesite staked out in the Jerusalem Memorial Park. He had virtually nothing, but was the most blessed man in all of history. He had all of His Father's character and none of our sins.

It was He who said in Luke,

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed *be ye* poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

(Luke 6:20,21)

His eyes were focused on a different kingdom, and in that kingdom those who were rich were likely to be poor, and those who were poor had a greater potential to be rich. It wasn't a given, but it was likely. Why? The deceitfulness of riches, that's why.

The barn-builder's problem was one of affluence. He had so much inventory, he had no more warehouse space. So he did what any fool would do. Instead of dispensing his worldly accumulation, letting it multiply itself through dispersion, *he ordained a building program*. He built bigger barns. After all, if he had been that prosperous up until now, *God owed it to him to keep it coming*.

His next temptation was to idleness. Instead of working harder, he went on a perennial party. "Eat, drink, and be merry," he decided. Why focus on eternal things when you have been so blessed. Instead of seeing his prosperity as a call to repentance

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and humility, he saw it as a call to presumption and riotous behavior.

God took care of that. He called him home. While the contractor was hammering and sawing and the bank was drawing up the papers to finance the extensions on his barns, The Master Banker called in the Big Loan. Life. It's on loan, remember? And what happened? He went home empty-handed and left his loved ones with barns full of rotting grain and a big note to pay off. Some legacy.

Beloved, riches are deceitful. Oh, they aren't, Satan is. But riches are one of his tools of deceit. And one way he deceives us is by taking the absolutes of Scripture and by the sheer intensity of the decline of the crumbling society around us, leads us to believe that if we try to be marginal in our giving, and marginal in our stewardship, and marginal in our greed, we are so much better than the world, *God has got to be impressed*. And the lives that could have been touched and would have been touched had we truly lived as though what we claim to believe is true, remain untouched, *because we have been deluded by the deceitfulness of riches*.

We laugh at the barn builder. But we shouldn't. We're not that different. When God blesses us *to any degree in any way*, we assume that He did so to improve our standard of living or to enlarge our comfort zone. He wanted us to have that new sofa or that new car or that new computer. After all, ours was only 200 mhz. The new ones are 300. And we're going to tithe on the bonus. We're going to give 10, even 15 percent of it to some eternal cause. With the rest, we'll build bigger barns. It'll be okay.

It never dawns on us that God might have intended that bonus to be a *pass-through gift to a missionary who is struggling to survive*, ministering to a people who are starving, both physically and spiritually. It was not just to make us more comfortable, or to enlarge our savings account. Then, you might be thinking, why didn't God just give the money to the missionary and save us the grief of seeing it evaporate?

Because He loves us, beloved, and He was giving us the opportunity by grace to lay up additional treasures in heaven. By letting the funds pass through our lives, we get blessed, the missionary gets blessed, and God gets the glory.

Oh, we plan to give more away. We do. As soon as we pay for

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the barns we're building. Or the house we're living in. Or the cars we're stock-piling like we're going to be in the Indy 500 next year. It's in our plan book.

Until finally God has to say, "Thou fool!" And with a wave of His eternal hand, He calls our name. We go home. Our savings account stays here. Our investments are nowhere to be found as we enter into the presence of the King. Our treasures in heaven are limited, though we had chance after chance both by gift and by life to send ahead and fill a bountiful storehouse with spiritual riches. We could have. We meant to. As soon as that barn was built, we meant to. And we knew better. We understood. We read about it, heard about it, taught about it, talked about it. We knew we couldn't take it with us, but we could send it ahead. Then why didn't we?

We were deceived, beloved. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches entered in *and choked the word of God right out of our hearts*. The end result? A limited legacy we cannot change. Oh, had we known our time was coming, we might have done differently. Really? No, not really. We know. Our time is coming. It is appointed unto man once to die. We know. But like Mr. Barn Builder, we just don't think it'll happen before we get that next barn built.

He was wrong. And so might we be, *unless we get our priorities straight and keep them that way*. In our next lesson, we will look at the character qualities riches surface, at God's incredible commandment, and at what true riches are really like. Until then, remember: God has entrusted you with the ability to give what you have away. Like the widow, it may only be pennies. Or like the barn-builder, it may be a bundle. The amount is not the issue. The issue is: Will you be a channel or a storehouse? Will you be a reflection of the generosity of God or will you be a victim of the deceitfulness of riches?

Only you can decide.

A Challenge to Further Study

1- Reread Jeremiah 17:7-10. What characteristics best describe the *blessed* man? How do you *spread out your roots*? What promises did that *blessed* man have? What does verse 9 teach us about ourselves? What is the heart?

2- Cross-reference *deceit*, *deceive*, and *deceitfulness* in

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Scripture. Did you realize it was mentioned so many times? Have you ever been deceived? What is deception?

3- What does Proverbs 20:1 tells us about strong drink? How can a glass of something deceive you?

4- What specific kind of deception is Jesus referring to in Mark 4:19? What other verses verify this problem?

A Challenge to Further Application

1- What two basic principles are surfaced in the last half of the lesson? (Pages 10,12) Are these principles new to you? Do you think you live as though these principles were absolutes?

2- Reread the parable of the barn-builder in Luke 12:16-21. What was this man's problem? How does it mirror the stewardship principles followed in our generation? Does it mirror your own spirit of presumption or greed?

3- Have you ever tried to imagine how much money will have gone through your hands by the time God calls you home? Do you agree with the formula on page 11 that tells us how much we can take with us? Do you believe you can send it ahead? How?

4- Why did Jesus say the poor would be *blessed*? Can you explain this to someone else?

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize I Timothy 6:17-19

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly "hear" his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It's been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that's a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you "hear" as you read.

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