



## The Devil Made Me Do It

### Part 11: Demonic Influence through the Deceitfulness of Riches

In our extended study of Satan's ability to affect a person's life, we are looking at the least binding level of involvement, which I am calling "demonic influence." Our last issue focused on the ways in which Satan tries to keep people from salvation or to stamp out the spiritual growth of new believers so they are ineffective in the Kingdom of God. I noted his use of the world and the "deceitfulness of riches" to choke out the development of fruit in a new believer's life (Mat. 13:22). Although my stated intention was to move on in this issue to look at Satan's use of false teachers to misdirect some who are "babes in Christ." I have felt led instead to examine more closely how he uses the "deceitfulness of riches" to derail the spiritual lives of both new and old believers.

The possession of monetary assets is not evil in itself. However, what we *do* with our money and our *attitude* towards it can be greatly influenced by Satan.

We'll look first at what we *do* with our money. When we use it to indulge the desires of our flesh and strengthen our bonds to the world, we are most obviously succumbing to Satan's enticements, whether we are new believers or not. Admittedly, a new Christian who has been indulging in this ungodly use of money before salvation may be particularly vulnerable to Satan's endeavors to keep him caught in this stranglehold that will surely impede his spiritual growth and usefulness in God's kingdom.

A less obvious way in which Satan can influence our use of money is in encouraging us to store it up for ourselves. Scripture indicates that stockpiling our assets to assure that our needs for the future are secure is putting our trust in fallible money rather than in our unfailing God (Mat. 6:19-20, 34; Luke 12:16-21; Prov. 23:4-5). It is serving self and building a treasure in the world rather than in the Kingdom of God. While letting go of this self-centered mindset takes tremendous faith, God promises that if we pursue a righteous life in His Kingdom, He will surely take care of not only our basic needs but all we need for true joy (Mat. 6:31-33, Luke 12:27-31; Phil. 4:19; 1 Tim. 6:17).

What God wants us to do with the money He allows us to have in addition to that necessary for meeting our essential needs is to use it for Kingdom purposes and the benefit of the poor (Luke 12:33; Acts 2:44-45). This sacrifice, which is pleasing in God's sight, is again coupled with the promise of His supplying all our need (Phil. 4:18-19).

While taking this step may be difficult for many, practicing a life of self-denial for the sake of the Kingdom of God increases the riches we will enjoy in the place God is preparing for us in heaven (Mat 6:20; Luke 12:33; John 14:6; 1 Tim. 6:18-19). Being unwilling to part with their money in this manner keeps many, like the rich young ruler, from salvation (Mat. 19:16-24; Luke 16:19-31). Others will reach heaven's gates but find themselves woefully bereft of the prosperity God desired them to have there—all because they chose to live in luxury during their brief sojourn on earth and failed to deposit money into their eternal "accounts."

The advantage that Satan gains in encouraging this "all for me" use of money lies not only in keeping some from salvation but also in depriving Kingdom ministries of the resources they need to extend their effectiveness and outreach. If believers who have been blessed with significant financial resources would put their extra money in this direction, these critical ministries would be freed from the time-consuming burden of fund-raising and be free to expend their energies doing that for which God truly called and equipped them.

Given this perspective, each of us does well to evaluate whose purposes our money is serving—God's or Satan's. Old Testament believers were required to give a tithe of their possessions towards God's work. I believe God holds up an even higher standard for New Testament believers.