



The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 12: Demonic Influence through the Deceitfulness of Riches (cont.)

In our last issue we addressed how Satan tries to influence man in the *use* of his money, getting him to spend it on worldly pleasures or to hoard it up selfishly for himself rather than using it to benefit the poor and God's eternal kingdom (Mat. 6:19-21; 19:21; Luke 12:16-21, 33; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Now we will go deeper and examine how Satan tries to influence our underlying *attitude* towards money, which can affect even those who have few financial resources themselves.

The world eagerly seeks after money for the pleasures, status, and security they hope it will provide. When we enter the family of God, our Heavenly Father is committed to supplying these things in an infinitely superior manner. Satan works hard, however, to keep man living under the bondage of a money-directed mindset. Using the same tactic he did in the Garden of Eden, he will often try to implant doubts and questions in a believer's mind concerning God's desire or ability to be his all-sufficient source of joy and material provision.

By getting us to continue to trust in money for these things instead of God, Satan sets up a shrine of idolatry in our hearts. While this may seem like strong language, Scripture distinctly labels greed and covetousness as "idolatry" (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). It also declares that serving mammon, or wealth, is mutually exclusive to serving God (Mat. 6:24), inferring again that the drive for personal, financial gain is entwined with an evil spiritual source.

Those caught in this subtle web of satanic influence put their spiritual lives in jeopardy of serious shipwreck. What begins as a seemingly innocent accumulation of material assets or a mere dabbling in worldly pleasures places one on a path of increasing temptation, activating foolish and harmful desires, which will eventually plunge him into misery, grief, ruin, and destruction (James 5:1-3; 1 Tim. 6:9). This is the "deceitfulness of riches" that Satan uses to render believers ineffective in God's Kingdom (Mat. 13:22).

By diverting man's attention to material things, Satan also succeeds in blinding him to the spiritual treasures that God desires to deposit in his life, which are the true key to abundant living and effective ministry (John 10:10; 1 Tim. 6:19). Not only is the person deprived of significant spiritual enrichments in this life, but in the end he will find that his selfish, materialistic focus in life has bankrupted his eternal inheritance in the heavenlies (Mat. 19:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22).

So the decision is ours. Will we serve God or mammon? While this is seemingly an easy question for Christians to answer, it becomes harder when it is asked in more specific terms. What we must really decide is if we are going to trust in money or God for our security (Mat. 6:31-33; Phil. 4:19), if we are going to seek our pleasure from that which worldly wealth provides or at our Father's right hand (Ps. 16:11; 1 Tim. 6:17), and whether we desire to be known as successful, rich, but mere, men (Luke 16:19; 18:18-25) or to shine as children of the living God in this life (1 John 3:1-2). The decisions we make in regard to these things will indicate where our hearts are (Mat. 6:21).

As long as we are looking to money as a means to provide our pleasure, security, or status, we are serving the spirit of mammon, not God. God desires us to be content having food and raiment (1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5) and to set our hearts on the true and eternal riches of His kingdom (Mat. 6:33). This does not necessarily mean that He expects all of us to live as paupers but to manage whatever material assets come into our lives wisely with a focus of using them, not for ourselves, but for the Kingdom of God. What a difference this would make in the funding of Christian ministries and the advancement of the Gospel throughout the world!