

## **Counterfeit Convictions**

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Scripture Reading – Malachi 3:8-12

- One of reasons that our churches should talk about money during the Divine worship service is that too many within the household of faith are broke, busted, and disgusted regarding their personal financial situation.
  - Practicing bad thinking about money can cause us to lose our way, financially and spiritually.
  - Bad thinking produces bad attitudes from which come into being actions that are detrimental to how we should handle our finances.
  - Listen to how bad attitudes about managing our money can impact on us negatively.
    - It can cloud our view of ourselves—we lack contentment.
    - Money misunderstanding can give birth to entitlement issues—our children feel entitled.
    - Finally, our marriages are being jeopardized because of our inability to manage and communicate about money.
- It takes a healthy mature person to handle money and money matters wisely. As a redeemed believer of the household of faith, I not only have the promises of God to illuminate my financial path, but also the guidance of the Holy Spirit to stay on target!
  - How I handle money reflects upon what is going on in my heart.
    - Faulty spiritual foundation is not the lack of biblical knowledge.
    - It is not the lack of conviction.
    - What we know we should implement gets clouded by counterfeit convictions.
  - Let me define for you the term counterfeit convictions:
    - Counterfeit convictions are beliefs that start out as biblical truths that we absorb into our minds incorrectly.
    - We decide (possibly for selfish reasons) that certain passages of Scripture do not apply to us so we will purposely choose the ones that

will make us comfortable yet ignore those passages that will bring about our personal growth.

- The result is that we neglect to pay attention to our spiritual road map disabling our heavenly guidance system that we are traveling down the road to spiritual maturity and miss our exit.
- Have you ever been lost trying to find the correct street, in order to make the correct turn, for the correct exit on the highway? You are happy to be on the right road, right highway but to your dismay, you still have not reached your destination because you are traveling in the wrong direction! **My point is this: It is not enough to be on the right road, you must be going in the right direction!**

[insert similar personal story]

- I live in Huntsville, Alabama. I have traveled to Nashville, Tennessee (about a two-hour drive depending on traffic). It does not matter how sincere I am, I will not get to Nashville if I am determined to drive on I-65 but go South rather than I-65 North.
- Our Scripture is found in Malachi. The book of Malachi is God's response to his people as he articulates six charges that he took personally regarding their counterfeit convictions.
  - Israel doubted God's love—God's care was viewed as insignificant. They sought independence, self-sufficiency. Counterfeit Conviction number 1- **I want you to save me when I mess up but I want to do what I want to do.** They set themselves in the direction which allowed for their own interpretation of what God deserved
  - **Matthew 6:24 (NLT)** <sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
  - Humans are tempted to worship that which they believe is mysterious, powerful and what they believe to be eternal.
    - We do not sacrifice children to ensure a good harvest, but we will sacrifice their well-being in pursuit of gaining more wealth.
    - We do not pay to fertility gods but we will use money we do not have to

chase a dream that we feel will make us look younger, thinner or taller and appear smarter.

- One of the greatest challenges in managing money is that money mimics everything God promises in salvation—even though God promises have an eternal impact on our lives. However, as we go in the wrong direction, faith begins to slowly give way to faithlessness.
  - A mansion in glory can be substituted for a house in your part of town.
  - Robes of righteousness can be viewed as an outfit from the most chichi shops in Atlanta or even in New York.
  - If I get sick, why pray when I have the money for good care and pay for my prescriptions.
- As a result of moving in the wrong direction, their counterfeit convictions brought about a sense of comfort seeking through compromise and hypocrisy.
- The people of God understood about the principles of sacrifice, but they would give leftovers, or what they did not want and called it a day.
  - *Counterfeit Conviction #2- I give based upon what I decide is best not what God requests.*
- Malachi reports that they brought to God animals that were lame, knowing that the lamb represent the spotless Lamb of God—Jesus Christ.
  - Some felt that this concept did not matter since the sacrifice was going to be burned up in a sacrifice - going through the motions and used this as an opportunity to give old stuff that I do not need or want and called it a sacrifice.

**[insert similar personal story]**

- Illustration: When I was a teenager, I would hear the call to give, I used this as an opportunity for me to give stuff I did not like (beets and lima beans and oatmeal). Here was my point!
  - I gave but it was a sacrifice on my part! It was an opportunity to clear shelf space in my pantry and ease my conscience that I responded to the call in church!
- The people of Malachi’s day saw nothing inaccurate in their relationship with God- In fact they were downright shocked in their evaluation against God concerns.
  - The people blamed God for financial mismanagement. Those who were righteous

(meaning them) were suffering misfortune, while those who were evildoers were being blessed (anybody else)

- They thought that God's justice was theirs as a result of their relationship with Abraham—did not God owe Abraham's children?
- This leads to Counterfeit Conviction #3- It is unfair of God to hold my actions of independence against me by not blessing me the way I deserve to be blessed.
- In 2 Timothy 3:1-4: Paul speaks of the last days- having a form of Godliness but denying the power thereof: lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, unforgiving, lacking self-control, brutal- It is the development of a narcissistic society full of depraved individuals whose morals have evaporated.
  - This is not secular members of society but nominal church members who have not grown and have become mutants- developing into a being independent of God!
  - Individuals who live lives that are guided by self-righteousness are capable of blaming God for their circumstances, holding God responsible.
- Our Scripture for this morning: Malachi 3:8 God declares "Will a man rob God?" Yet you have robbed Me! How can you say that when we have been models of spiritual awareness and accountability?
  - Yet in many instances, tithes and offerings were used to finance homes, cars and clothing rather than meet their relational obligation with God.
  - It was not that they were not giving, they were not giving what God asked for: they were giving less than 10% , they knew that this was not what God had asked, but God should not complain—they were at a crossroad for the blessings of God were interrupted by their mind set.
  - Open up the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing and I will rebuke the devourer for your sake. You must move in the right direction on the right road!
- Appeal: Your counterfeit convictions cannot stand the test of the word of God—you need a transformed mind set.
  - Illustrations to giving meaning: Borrowed car from a friend for 12 months, then I am to return it to him.
  - Suppose I drive a friend's car for a whole year, in that time I make it mine
    - Preselect channels on the satellite radio, etc.

- Adjust seating to my personal standards
- Now it is time to return the car- If drive past the place, I see him standing outside—I am dishonest—It is still not mine!
- The greatest blessing that comes to the giver is the development of trust in God! Trust in God means that I will stay on track.
  - My Goal is the closer I move in God's direction, the greater the image I will see of Him!