

The Life and Death of Mr. Badman

February 12th, 2017 - The Life and Death of Mr. Badman
Chapter 10 - "The Simple Christian's View of Extortion" (pages 80-83, please read it first)

Who's not looking for the deal of the century? Those who love to barter or those who brag on the best deal that they landed in either buying or selling. Wiseman continues on in this chapter to dig deeper into the topic of extortion and what God has to say about it. Many would say that this topic is antiquated and that no one, Christian or non-Christian, can keep from acting at times in this fashion. But God isn't antiquated and does not want us to be conformed to what society dictates to us. What was lawful and good for the Israelites and the New Testament early church Christians, is good and righteous for us today, no matter where we live in the world. This chapter requires some serious soul searching.

Wiseman says the following; *"that think with scorn that something should be called extortionate."* Extortionate is defined as; *"(of a price) much too high; exorbitant. 'i.e. extortionate ticket prices'; synonym's are excessively, high, excessive, outrageous, unreasonable, inordinate, inflated, exacting, harsh, severe, oppressive."* It also means; *"using or given to extortion; i.e. the extortionate power of the unions"*. You've seen those who wait in line to purchase concert or sports tickets, only to sell them at an extortionate price when there are none left to purchase. Christians purchase tickets to ungodly concerts in order to just flip the ticket to make an exorbitant profit, allowing someone to sit under ungodly entertainment which corrupts their soul. They may justify their actions accusing the buyer to be gullible to pay so much, but I believe it's actually the person selling who isn't acting righteously. It happens! As we read last week, extortioners fall into the same lot as drunkards, idolaters, fornicators ... and will not inherit the kingdom of God, I Corinthians 6:9-10.

For the most part, Wiseman is dealing with extortion of the poor, but whether rich or poor, extortion takes place at all levels of society. **Ezekiel 22:12-14** says; *"In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion, and have forgotten Me," says the Lord GOD. "Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and will do it."*

Proverbs 22:16 says; *"He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty."* **Proverbs 22:22-23** also says; *"Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them."* Wiseman goes on to say; *"But, above all, your hucksters [aggressive salespersons] that buy up the poor man's victuals wholesale, and sell it to him again for an unreasonable profit by retail, and, as we call it, piecemeal, they are in the game of charging a stinging rate, which is extortion. I am referring to those who buy up butter, cheese, eggs, bacon, etc., wholesale, then sell it again, as they call it, by pennyworths, two pennyworths, a halfpennyworth, or such like, to the poor, after the market is closed."* Taking advantage of people in their circumstances, where you have them over a barrel or backed up against the wall with no other option is not what God requires of His children.

Amos 5:11 says; *"Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them."* An extortioner will not enjoy life as Amos says. Their heart will always be unfulfilled. If somehow you think that jacking up prices in buying or selling is good stewardship, maybe think again to see if it's really extortion. Although you're looking for making a great deal, are you going beyond market value and what is reasonable, fair and just?

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"WISEMAN: Besides, they are usurers. Yes, they take usury for food, which the Lord has forbidden. (Deut. 23:19) And because they cannot do it so effectively on market-day, they do it, as I said, when the market is closed. Then the poor fall into their mouths out of necessity, as they must, for their needs, and they resolve that they will pay soundly for it. Some, perhaps, will criticise me for my meddling in other people's business, and for prying into the secrets of their iniquity. But to such, I say this, that since such actions are evil, it is time they were hissed out of the world. All who do such things offend against God, wrong their neighbours, and, like Mr. Badman, provoke God to judgement." Usury is the illegal action or practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest.

The above mentioned scripture, **Deuteronomy 23:19** says; "You shall not charge interest to your brother— interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest." **Ephesians 4:28** says; "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

"WISEMAN: The same also can be said for buying. No one may always buy as cheaply as he can without using his good conscience in buying; which is not true if he buys always as cheaply as he can, and that for the reasons I mentioned earlier. For such will make a prey of the ignorance, need, and trust of their customer, which they cannot do with a good conscience. When Abraham wanted to buy a burial-place from the sons of Heth, this is what he said to them: "If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a burying place amongst you." (Gen. 23:8-9)"

According to **James 2:23**, Abraham was called the friend of God, he believed what God told him and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Abraham was just and righteous in his dealings with his neighbours as we read above. He paid Ephron what the field was worth - no bartering or bargaining.

We read about King David's purchase of a threshing floor to build an altar and sacrifice offerings to God. He needed this because he sinned by taking a population census which was not authorized by God. This purchase of land and offering was meant to stay God's further judgment on the people of Israel because of his sin. The story is as follows in **I Chronicles 21:22-26**; "Then David said to Ornan, "Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the LORD. You shall grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." But Ornan said to David, "Take it to yourself, and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. Look, I also give you the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing implements for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering; I give it all." Then King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing." So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering."

WISEMAN says; *"He also, like Abraham, made conscience of this kind of dealing. He would not lie, nor take opportunity of an unfair advantage over the Jebusite, but would give him his full price for the field. He knew that there was wickedness in the principle of selling too dear, and buying too cheap, so he wouldn't do it."*

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Jesus says in **Matthew 22:37-40**; *"And Jesus replied to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the first and great commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for others].' The whole Law and the [writings of the] Prophets depend on these two commandments."* Jesus says everything in the Law is summarized in these two commands. It's the love walk. Likewise the Apostle Paul says in **I Corinthians 13:5**; *"It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured."* This kind of love is thinking about the other person first, looking out for their interests. It's not about how you can win, the love walk isn't about you, it's about others. Let's renew our mind and do away with worldly selfish thinking that our life is only about me, myself and I! It's about others, the needs of your neighbours.

That's why Wiseman says the following; *"He who sells his goods as dear, or for as much money always, as he can, seeks himself, and himself alone. But charity seeks not her own only." "He who sells his goods always for as much as he can get, hardens his heart against all reasonable entreaties from the buyer. But he who does so cannot exercise charity in his dealing. Therefore, it is not lawful for a man to sell his goods, as I said before, as dear as he can. If it is lawful for me to sell my goods as usual, as dear as I can, then there is no sin in my trading, however unreasonably I manage my calling, whether by lying, swearing, cursing, cheating; for all this was to sell my goods as dear as I can. (Eph. 4:25) But that there is sin in it all is evident. Therefore I may not sell my goods always as dear as I can." Ephesians 4:25* says; *"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."*

These next verses couldn't be clearer when Jesus says in both **Luke 6:31** and **Matthew 7:12**; *"And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise."* and *"So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you, for this is [the essence of] the Law and the [writings of the Prophets]."* How do you want to be treated? How do you want to be dealt with? Do you want people to rip you off? Do you want people to take advantage of your circumstances? How about the next time you see your neighbour who is having to sell off their possessions due to an economic misfortune, offer them fair market value for what their selling instead of bartering them down for more. Or the Holy Spirit might tell you to pay them even more than fair market value. The testimony of Christ is also at stake here. It might be the key to have them turn to Jesus, the fact that you didn't take advantage of them could be pivotal. Take your rational and reason out of the picture and be led by the Holy Spirit. See what His perfect will is for the circumstance. In the natural, it may not look like you're the head and that you're the tail when you go above and beyond, but that's not how God sees it. He will bless you more than what you'll be able to contain when you don't fall into extortion.

Colossians 3:17; *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."* In **Luke 14:12-14**, Jesus talks about going the next mile, *"Jesus also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or wealthy neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a banquet or a reception, invite the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the ^[a]righteous (the just, the upright)."* In many gatherings as referenced above, it's for hob-knobbing, deal making, networking...all for one's personal advantage. Inviting someone who will be able to give you a leg up, a deal or promotion. Jesus sees it very differently. Don't seek to do things for your advantage, benefit or financial security when it comes to treating others.

As extortion refers to money, Jesus gives very clear understanding as to how it can divide your heart. **Luke 16:13-15** says; *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he*

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will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew Henry's Commentary says the following about this verse; "We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make mammon, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service ([Luke 16:13](#)): No servant can serve two masters, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and mammon are. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world. But, on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world (whenever God and the world come in competition) and will despise it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to his furtherance in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us: Ye cannot serve God and mammon. So divided are their interests that their services can never be compounded. If therefore we be determined to serve God, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world."

I believe this chapter has been clear regarding extortion. We can't throw our hands up in the air and say 'it's impossible not to extort someone for gain'. The Holy Spirit is your helper and the same way He delivers you from other temptations, He can deliver you from taking advantage of the poor, people or persons in their misfortune...or deliver you from your thoughts to just get what you want for the price you want. We live this life in all our dealings through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by the power of the world system and societal dictates. We're different. And just like any other temptation, your flesh may scream for a while in the midst of a lifestyle change, but you will have peace with God in fleeing temptation. We're different. God will prove himself faithful in all your business dealings if you honour him first. Don't grow weary in doing good and righteous, God will honour your obedience to Him.