

# **HARVEST ROCK CHURCH**

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## **BREAKING THE SPIRIT OF MAMMON AND POVERTY FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP SERIES**

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**TEXT: 3 John 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

#### **A. SOME COMMENTS ON 3 JOHN 2**

1. The apostle John wrote this around 95 AD. We don't know who Gaius is. It was a common name.
2. John writes this to combat the emergence of a heresy called Gnosticism.
3. This is an opening greeting, but the wording is germane to the context of the issues of the gnostic heresy.
4. It is a prayer: "I pray that in all respects that you may prosper."
5. Your prosperity and health are connected with your soul prospering. Your soul is your mind, emotions, and will. Even though your spirit is brand new the moment you give your life to Jesus, you have the same soul and same body. The goal of the Christian walk is to get your soul to be conformed to God's mind, emotions, and will. Think like God, feel what He feels, and do what He would do.
6. Physical poverty is linked with your soul being impoverished.
7. Sanctification takes place when we have our soul healed and our body doing the will of God.

#### **B. PLATONIC THINKING: a religious spirit of poverty.**

1. Plato lived 350-400 years before Jesus was born. He was a disciple of Socrates and the mentor to Aristotle. His writings had a tremendous influence on the early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and even Augustine. He taught dualism.
2. Dualism is the philosophical doctrine that the universe contains opposed powers of good and evil, especially seen as balanced equals.
3. **Plato taught that the spirit or the philosophical world was good, and the material world was evil.**
4. It sounded Christian, but there were two flaws to that philosophy. First, when God created the physical world in Genesis 1, He declared His material world "good." Second, there is good and evil, but they are not equal. It is not like the Yin and Yang, or the Dark Force and the Light Force in Star Wars. God is greater than Satan, and good overcomes evil. Unfortunately, Plato's philosophy



- sounded Christian. Like 1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
5. Ironically, not loving the world is not just hating sin and evil, but not conforming to the ideologies and vain philosophies of the world.
  6. As a result, a heresy formed called Gnosticism. It refers to a certain “knowing” and revelation of dualism, and it influenced the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Docetic Gnostics did not believe that Jesus bodily rose from the dead because it would affirm the material world; the physical world was inferior. They believed that Jesus rose as a ghost.
  7. John combats this heresy by saying in **1 John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life...** John is basically saying, “I was there after the resurrection, and I even ate fish and bread with Jesus on the beach” (see John 21:12-14).
  8. But by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the damage was done. By 140 AD you have the writings of *The Shepherd of Hermas* saying that you can go to a high level of spirituality through asceticism. You start to see the beginnings of the monastic movement. Many believers who went into the monastic life wanted to seek God and salvation, and they thought you had to live an ascetic life to achieve that union with God. Salvation had been reduced to works instead of grace until Martin Luther’s 1517 Reformation.
  9. In the monastic movement, you had to make three vows. First, a vow of chastity: no sex. Again, the physical was inferior to the spirit world. Second, a vow of poverty: no money and possessions. And third, a vow of obedience. This mentality entered the Church, and to this day, poverty is equated with piety. It is a religious spirit.
  10. God used the monks to translate and upkeep the Scriptures. They were some of the most literate people, and soon they became the teachers at schools and universities. They were at the top of the education mountain of their time, and to this day, our education system in Western society is influenced by Greek thinking instead of Hebraic thinking.

## **I. TWO STRONGHOLDS THAT MUST BE BROKEN TO ENJOY BIBLICAL PROSPERITY**

### **A. UNDERSTANDING STRONGHOLDS**

- 1. 2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the**

flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses [or mental strongholds]. (NASB)

2. **2 Corinthians 10:4** The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of the flesh and blood] but are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds. (AMP)
3. **2 Corinthians 10:5** *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (NASB)

## **B. TWO MASSIVE GLOBAL STRONGHOLDS**

1. **SPIRIT OF MAMMON: Matthew 6:24** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth [the Greek word is *Mamona* or Mammon] (George Otis Jr. *The Last of the Giants*. Materialism)
2. **SPIRIT OF POVERTY: John 10:10** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have *it* abundantly.” God wants to prosper you. It stands to reason that the enemy wants to keep you poor.

## **II. FIVE SIGNS THAT YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY OR A POVERTY MENTALITY**

### **A. YOU GREW UP IN AN IMPOVERISHED NATION**

1. Ravishes of COMMUNISM.
2. **THE RAVAGES OF WAR:** Peter Wagner’s quote, “There are three things that have impacted a nation: 1) Wars, 2) Knowledge, 3) Wealth. The greatest is wealth.”
3. **ROMAN CATHOLIC STRONGHOLDS:** religious spirit of poverty.

### **B. YOU COME FROM GENERATIONS OF POVERTY**

1. The Depression generation or the Great Recession generation. An immigrant upbringing. You were brought up in poverty
2. **I said in 2008, “Don’t let this recession be imprinted onto your soul.”**
3. **You can be wealthy but have a poverty mentality. My father-in-law, an MD, would not leave a tip. I would have to tip for him.**
4. **Don’t let the inflation of 2022 be imprinted onto your soul.** Inflation is at a 40-year high.
5. Peter Wagner was brought up near the end of the Depression, and then he was influenced with a religious spirit of poverty as a missionary.
6. At the end of this message before we bring forth our firstfruits, as your pastor I want to break the spirit of poverty off you and your bloodline. Some of you



have gone through this, but from my experience, there are layers to this issue, and I believe that God wants you to be totally delivered.

**C. YOU HAVE A HARD TIME THEOLOGICALLY BELIEVING THAT GOD WANTS YOU RICH**

- 1. 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**

**D. YOU HAVE A HARD TIME RECEIVING GIFTS FROM OTHERS OR YOU APOLOGIZE FOR BEING BLESSED**

- I had a spirit of poverty going back to 1992 when my father retired as Senior Pastor from his church, the Antioch Baptist Church in northern Virginia. It was also during the time I had resigned from my previous church, Abundant Life Church in Pasadena. My dad asked me to speak at his retirement service, and my brother and I flew from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. to participate in this milestone. After the service, we went to a Chinese restaurant for lunch, and after eating, my dad leaned back and said, “Ché Ho [he called me by my full name when he got serious], normally I would give you an honorarium [which is true because I had spoken at his church several times before]. But I am going to give you something better. I am going to give you my Rolex watch!” He took off his watch and handed it to me. My heart sank. First, because I was looking forward to the cash honorarium to support my family in LA. But second, because of my poverty mentality, I would never wear a Rolex watch even if it was given to me by my dad.
- I quickly said, “Dad, I can’t wear a Rolex watch—I am a pastor!” As soon as I said it, I immediately realized what a stupid statement that was. My dad laughed, “What are you talking about? I am a pastor and I have been wearing this watch for years, and now I am giving it to you.” I realized that I would hurt my dad if I didn’t receive it. So, I received his gift but put the watch in my drawer and never wore it until God broke the spirit of poverty off my life through Cindy Jacobs several years later in 1997.

**E. YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH PARSIMONY OR YOU ARE “MEAN”**

- In England, I was talking to Roger Foster, and he told me that British people are mean. I said, “They are some of the nicest people I know, including you.” He replied, “I don’t mean ‘mean’ like nasty but ‘mean’ as in cheap.”
- 2. Mean: (mainly British) unwilling to give or share things, especially money; not generous: she felt mean not giving a tip. [New Oxford American Dictionary]**



3. You are not generous (e.g. you don't pick up the tab, you don't give spontaneous gifts to others).
4. **You struggle with the fear of lack.** Even though you know that the Word says that He will meet all your needs according to His riches, you are still bound in fear.
5. **But that is not the character of God the Father.** He is a giver. “For God so loved the world that He gave...”
6. **Proverbs 11:25 The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.**

### **III. HOW TO BREAK THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY AND MAMMON**

#### **A. REPENT**

#### **B. RENEW YOUR MIND**

#### **C. COME IN THE OPPOSITE SPIRIT BY BEING GENEROUS**

#### **1. GOD HAS INSTITUTED THE TITHE AND OFFERINGS TO HELP US FROM TWO EVILS: THE LOVE OF MONEY AND A SPIRIT OF POVERTY**

#### CONCLUSION:

Let me explain how the spirit of poverty was broken off me. It came in stages, but the key moment took place in October 1997.

We were having a prophetic conference, and Cindy Jacobs was one of the main speakers. During the lunch break, one of our church members named Patricia came up to me. She told me that she had recently lost her job, but she felt God leading her to give a significant offering of several thousand dollars. I told Patricia that I couldn't accept her offering because she needed the money just to get by.

After our conversation, Patricia happened to see Cindy Jacobs in the bookstore and proceeded to tell her about what had just happened. The next thing I knew, Cindy was running straight in my direction (in high heels!). She immediately confronted me and said, “You stole this woman's blessing by not receiving her offering.” She then called out the spirit of poverty and broke that spirit over my life.

By the end of the day, Cindy Jacobs had taken up an offering, and over \$18,000 was given to help Patricia and her family. The next week she got a better job, and her husband also got a better one. Praise God!