

Notes on The Life of a God-made Man Chapter 9

Raj Balasubramanian, iyer@brahminbeliever.com

2018-09-24 09:20

if you are reading this on web, download the pdf or listen by downloading the coming soon

This chapter was on *man and his wealth*. This chapter goes together with both the chapters on work (chapter7) and leader (chapter8), as we will in the references I make in this summary.

Like the work topic, the topic of wealth can be a treatise in itself, but for the brevity of the study, I will stick with a normal length post. If you find any error in my logic, reasoning, please correct my error biblically, so I can strengthen my walk with the Lord.

I grew up happy but below middle class, with not many possessions and living in small quarters, until I ended up in college, when my dad had a better job and was able to afford a larger house with separate rooms. I remember how my parents had very little; once they were worried about not having any rupees in the bank account before the month ran out and the next pay came in, and there were still days left we had to buy groceries.

My parents always made sure there was food, clothing and the basics. I became a miser at this stage and conserved resources, as I was worried I might run out of what we had.

In college, I started running various businesses, selling door to door and hustling jewelry and graduating to selling stocks. I became a sub broker in a new stock exchange (in Coimbatore) that lasted for under a year before I had to leave for US.

As I started my college and career in US, I had enough baggage around - hoarding, views on budget, money and retirement; the views also was a blend of a lower middle class brahmin mixed with Ayn Randian philosophy in a new found freedom with making the greenbacks and a fear of loosing savings.

I thought *greed is good* (Wallstreet) and making money was noble (Ayn Rand). Afterall thats why I came to the states.

Coupled with this, the materialistic culture fueled by a growing economy in late 1990s and the consumerism supported by growing credit, messed up an already

fallen Raj.

This was also the time I started my family with Stef and brought in children which immediately brought in more stuff and increased worries for the future.

After I became a believer in Fall 2017, I experienced a range of thoughts around money - from giving up all my wealth and moving to become a Essene (possibly like the Qumran folks) to not being sure how to feel about making more money for the purpose of God. But I became more convinced of God being the author of property rights and the biblical basis for Austrian school of economics over Keynesian.

I am still growing in this aspect, so what I am writing is subject to change as I study the Scriptures more and understand God's truth through the Holy Spirit.

All the wealth are His

[Eccle 5:19] states that as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. [Deut8:18] reminds us that the Lord God has given us the ability to produce wealth. The entire book of Exodus is the promise of God who for no merit of the Israelites, took them out from brick laying slaves of the Pharaoh to making them possessors of a rich and fertile land in the middle east; this land also was the best trade route of its day.

Hence money and wealth is not inherently evil, but its the love of it and making it an idol, that is the evil [Mat 6:24].

Everything I have is His.

Being rich or poor

Therefore being rich or poor is not the issue. In [1Sam2] Hannah's prayer brings the fact that the LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. There are references to poor, even as He is bringing them out of Egypt and setting them up for the promised land. [Ex22:25,Exo23:3,Lev14:21]. Therefore we cant use our social constructs to define wealth as bad and poverty as good. God in His omniscience, commanded the Hebrews to leave the fallen fruits and grains for the needy to glean [Lev19:10], which Naomi and Ruth use to make a living when they return to Bethlehem. He also made provisions for the poor in having a set of offerings they could afford.

Sidebar: Doing with less is always a better mindset, even if we perceive we have more. We started practicing purging when we decided to periodically go through our house and get rid of excess

or donate. This is aligned with traditional fall cleaning but also with re-look at the *stuff* we have in our possession around Christmas holidays. Once a decade or so we evaluate if we need to get rid of everything and move. We did that in 2005 when we sold everything (other than books and few personal possessions) and traveled around living in a Class A RV. In 2013 timeframe we sold the 4500 sqft home with acreage and moved into 1300sqft condo in Austin. In 2016 we made the decision to move to Galveston for a better lifestyle and have been praying about the next season when my sons graduate and leave to be on their own.

Poverty is not piety

Therefore we cant equate poverty to piety. There were christians that I used to talk to who assumed being poor is a sign of piety. This is as ridiculous as smiling Joel equating his wealth and prosperity as a sign of his piety. As in the case of Job when God allowed for his wealth and health to be taken, in the end its all for His glory. But if there were life choices made or human responsibilities not exercised, then we need to humble ourselves, repent and understand what is God calling for us to do. Are we in a poor state because of our choices? Is our health causing not to take on certain vocation that would otherwise keep us in the black? Do we have dignity and pride issues in doing certain jobs that are available to us, therefore examine our hearts and motives?

Charity is over-rated

Before I became a believer, when we were in Austin area, I had noticed some church members expected us to be generous as they felt like we had more than them. It bordered on socialism. The other issue I had was the abuse I saw in the donations we made. Although we felt good about donating and giving, we didnt see the end results as it was out of sight out of mind. I also ran into several believers who made charity/generosity their idol and their means of justification.

When I became a believer I made sure that we not only gave with what God had given us in terms of material things, but also our time. I also prayed to see how we had to be generous. Social media has definitely tainted our view with causing more jealousy, envy and covetousness, when we are inundated with missionary lives, charities and the do-gooders who post all the time, while all we do is have our mocha latte waiting on the next tweet or instagram post to load.

We also had to watch for the cultural invasion of SJW in our churches and lives.

Social justice issues

Much of what I saw and see more of in the churches is the invasion of culture, where the concepts of socialism and equality (in the form of robbing from the haves to give to the have-nots) is pervasive in how my fellow believers view giving. Both in the form of guilt laid on *so called* richer believers and a free pass given to folks who are not *rich* materially.

This is **not** biblical. The foundational statement quoted by mainstream christians is that of *Jesus saying love your neighbor*. The first appearance of this occurs in [Lev19:18] which gets quoted in [Mat5:43]. But the verses before that in [Lev] talks about not showing partiality to the poor.

[Lev19:13] talks of not holding on to what is rightful to a man even for a night and in [Lev19:15], Lord God says “You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.”

Therefore when a brother brings up social justice, equality of results and wealth distribution, we need to reconcile the truth of [Luke3:11]

And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”

against [1Thess5:14]

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

and [Eph4:28]

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Stewardship and generosity

Therefore it brings us to how to be generous without squandering what God has provided for. Is He expecting me to help brothers and sisters in need or reach out to strangers affected by weather events or orphans in Mumbai slums? Few examples from my recent months,

- I used to spend both my time and money on things that took me away from my family. As I have stated in the previous posts if I dont take care of my own, I am worse than an unbeliever.
- After prayer with my wife, we felt that we need to start being generous within the our GBC church first, before reaching outside. This started with paying attention to the needs of other believers by building relationship

and sharing lives with them. The other area we started to look at was to help the singles and college-aged. We started Friday night fellowships. This meant that we had to plan and budget in what Stef brought for groceries every week. Also played with the quality we wanted to get for the Friday nights and not always go with a cheap meal, but make it hearty without spending too much money.

- I started to see areas we had to cut so we could spend on the weekly groceries prudentially. This started with cutting out on eating-out we did every week. We cut that by few hundred to divert to the grocery budget. The eating-out were really squandering and convenient-driven instead of planning and being prepared.
- We are also working out a plan on how to get out of debt, even if the interest and tax benefits look appealing from worldly standpoint.
- From a time standpoint, Stef and I are still working how to ensure we dont spend so much time outside serving others or squandering time, while neglecting each other and our sons’s spiritual needs.
- Other way I am prioritizing my time is more in the Word (studying Scriptures) and prayer.
- I am still praying about the topic of *tiething* which I will save to write longer for a later date. But for this writing, I want to state that we started to allocate a percentage of our earnings as offerings back to GBC, not as *tieth*. I have run into many church-goers from my previous life who think they are owed something by God (blessings) as they have been religious in their tiething. The money preachers like Kenny and Benny have abused this concept of sowing a seed, which has really corrupted our Lord’s purpose.

Its all a matter of my heart

In the end, its all a matter of my heart. In all of my reading so far, Jesus admonishes both rich and poor. He uses parables that are to do with the wealthy denouncing them [Mat19:23] as well as using the stewardship of the wealth [Luke19:11-27].

Similarly, [2Thess3:10]

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command:
If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

needs to be reconciled with [Acts2:44-45]

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.
And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

[Luke12:34] summarizes it best “For where your treasure is, there your heart will

be also.” Followed by “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit.” As the message is to focus on the treasures in Heaven and not on earth. This doesn't mean we are to be reckless and foolish with our money either.

What is in my heart when I give or not give is more important than how much I am giving or what I am doing around whatever wealth God has given me. Am I accumulating wealth because I don't trust God or do I want to do something that is driven by the flesh?

I am also looking to make sure I am doing God's purpose and not my own or what I think is God's purpose. This to me has become more important than how much I have or don't have or keeping scores with the Jones. Therefore, I am focusing on obedience to God, fearing the Lord, taking time to walk by applying the Word and instead of expecting blessing based on the tieth or my works, I am checking my heart to not expect this. And when I do, I repent.

Before, when I saw a beggar I would be moved to give him or her money or scold them to go find a job, based on the situation. But now, time permitting, I engage in a dialog and give money directly if I can see the use or take them to get a sandwich or food. I have brought few vagabonds Starbucks coffees and frappuccinos. Recently, a brother ran out of money and was stuck without gas. I saw to it that he went to the gas station across using the \$20 worth of gas.

Being obedient to God is more important than acting like a good samaritan and expecting the reward of being praised by Jesus. I am also getting off from the mind-set of one-size fits all when it comes to how to deal with the overall concept of wealth.

God has also placed both young and old, men and women who have showed how to value time and money. In some cases, I have counseled them on budgeting or management of money. In more instances, I have learnt my own follies or how much I have squandered God's provisions and been a bad steward.

All my talents, my time, my strengths, health, my job, family and the money is a gift from God. I need to walk by trusting in God for all provisions and although it's easy to comprehend intellectually it's probably the most hard aspect of giving over all to my Christ Jesus.

A more detailed post on tieth and perception of wealth coming later.