

# Moral Bankruptcy or Spiritual Wealth

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of finding moral wealth in Christ Jesus, rather than in material wealth, and encourages believers to put on the new man by following Christ's example.*

**Scripture:** John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 4:22, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 2:3, Colossians 3:10, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:1

**Topics:** "Moral Decline", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

H.J. Vine addresses the prevalent 'moral bankruptcy' in society, especially in so-called Christian nations, causing discouragement among believers. However, those rooted in the Word of God are not disheartened, understanding the prophesied perilous times and moral decline. True believers find salvation in Christ Jesus, rejoicing in Him as both Saviour and Exemplar, following His example after receiving eternal salvation. They are renewed in righteousness and holiness, contrasting the corrupt ways of the 'old man' with the moral prosperity of the 'new man' found in Christ.

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## Transcript

Religious leaders, ecclesiastics, politicians, judges and others who are keenly interested in present conditions, all speak of the "moral bankruptcy" which is prevalent. The shipwreck is visible on all sides and the wreckage is cast up before the gaze of the observer from the troubled seas of the nations! We speak specially of the so-called Christian nations.

This must seriously discourage, as well as sadden, the hearts of all believers in the gospel who are not instructed in the Word of Truth. But those who know and value the Bible, which is the Word of God, are not discouraged. They are saddened as they see the general downgrade in regard to faith and morals, but they are not disheartened or daunted in the conflict of the faith thereby, for the Spirit of God has taught them concerning this very departure from the right ways of God.

In 2 Timothy 3 the Holy Spirit says, "This know,"--for it was a matter that no servant of the Lord should remain ignorant of--"in the last days perilous times shall come!" Then follows a list of the things which mark the moral bankruptcy of a degraded Christendom. In comparing this list with Romans 1:24-32, which describes the corruptions of heathendom, we become painfully aware of the fact that some of the worst forms of sin and iniquity, which were foretold in regard to Christendom, are but a recrudescence of what obtained in darkest heathendom. Nor is this only predicted in the Word of God, but on all sides the evils are so in evidence that, as we have said, it is commonly spoken of as "moral bankruptcy," and mostly by

men who are quite unaware that their very words do but prove the truth of the Bible.

Those who have salvation in Christ Jesus, redemption and forgiveness of sins through His blood, are taught by the Holy Spirit, who indwells them, to rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, not only as Saviour but also as Exemplar. The order may not be reversed! He is only known as our example after He has first saved us with an everlasting salvation! Being saved, we are free to follow Him as our Pattern and our Guide. Of such the apostle says in Ephesians, "Ye are saved by grace" (2:5-8), and "have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (4:21).

These latter words connect themselves with the passage which shows that we are blessed and enriched in what is "new" in contrast to the wretched and bankrupt state of what is "old." For our instruction, the Spirit designates one as "the new man" and the other as "the old man" (vv. 22-24). True believers are of the one, unbelievers are of the other. The first describes what is vital and genuine, the second that which is corrupt and deceitful. Being renewed in the spirit of their minds, believers are not exactly exhorted to put on the new man, for that has taken place; so it reads, "having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness" (v. 24, N.Tr.). This shows where real moral wealth is to be found. On the other hand we read in verse 22 of "having put off according to the former conversation the old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts" (N.Tr.). Here we see what marks moral degeneracy today as well as in the apostle's day.

The true riches which belong to the redeemed in Christ Jesus find their exemplification in the Saviour, the Son of God, as we have said, "the truth is in Jesus"; and Colossians 3 tells us that those of the new man are "renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him" (v. 10, N.Tr.), also that "Christ is everything, and in all." Therefore being "the elect of God, holy and beloved," they are to put on in a practical way "bowels of compassion, kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another." They are told to act as Christ did, and to let the peace of Christ and the word of Christ preside and dwell richly within. There is no moral bankruptcy here, but rather moral prosperity.

Travelling in a railway carriage some while ago, a wealthy man of the world talked with an earnest believer on the Son of God. He spoke sadly of the corrupt state of society in general, and of the unhappiness of the well-to-do, especially remarking that there was something seriously wrong in conditions that produced such misery.

The child of God to whom he was talking rejoined, "One of the happiest men I have ever met, lives in a small town near by, and he earns his living by sweeping the roads. Some have spoken of him as a spiritual gentleman."

"That is interesting," remarked the other, "How is his happiness to be accounted for?"

"First of all," was the answer, "because he has found his soul's need met by his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ! and secondly, because he has found true and lasting satisfaction in following Him closely. He is a living proof that moral wealth is more important than material wealth."

A man on leaving the graveside of a beloved saint of God, remarked to me, "That was a fine woman over whose grave you spoke to us!"

"Well," I replied, "I know she had a wonderful Saviour--God's beloved Son!"

"Yes," he answered, "and that is what made her such a fine woman!"

It is refreshing and cheering in these days of moral bankruptcy to be reminded now and again of the source of moral wealth. In the Son of God is the fullness, and the saints who are in Christ Jesus find their completeness for all in Him. Indeed Colossians 2:3 brings both together, for there it should read "in which" rather than "in Him," for the Spirit is speaking of "the mystery" which is "Christ and the assembly"; so it says, "In which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (N.Tr.). The riches of God's grace have blessed us in Christ, and the riches of the glory are to be expressed through the saints thus blessed in Him, because Christ is in them.

Moreover it is strengthening and encouraging to us who find ourselves in these very days--foretold as "difficult days"--to find that the Bible is so fully to be relied upon that it has told us of the moral break-down before it came to pass.

Finally, we see that the very attacks of Modernism upon this Book--which has Christ as its divine Subject--are only helping on the general bankruptcy which men deplore, and this surely causes us to turn the more wholeheartedly to the Word of God, to learn by the Spirit's teaching more of the glorious and gracious Saviour, who has made the Father known, and caused us to sing,

"Happy still in God confiding;

Fruitful, as in Christ abiding;

Steadfast, through the Spirit's guiding:

All must be well."

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