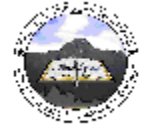




On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

Vol XIII No.1

January/February 2005

Materialism; Beware The Trap

Many people are misled into accepting substance as validation for spirituality. That is not to say that God does not take care of His people, or that Christians need to be poor and down-trodden. However, we must take the Word of God seriously:

Luke 12:15

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Often we find ourselves thinking that things would be better if our means were more abundant. However, the Lord was quite clear when he said, “a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

The Bible in Basic English renders Luke 12:15 as follows:

“And he said to them, Take care to keep yourselves free from the desire for property; for a man's life is not made up of the number of things which he has.”

It is inherently dangerous to get too caught up in material goods. We all know this and yet the “shiny lure” of gain is ever before us.

I Timothy 6:1-12

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the

name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed.

And they that have believing masters, let *them* not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

There are those who have been tricked into confusing gain with godliness.

Verses 6-9

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts,

which drown men in destruction and perdition.

They “will” to be rich! In other words, their main purpose and desire in life is to be rich. As Christian believers our purposes and desires should be much higher. We dare not set our life solely on the shallow goal of being rich, those who do are drowned in destruction and perdition! If death and ruin are your aim, the love of money is the method.

Verse 10

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The opening phrase of this verse is widely misquoted. They say, and I know you've heard it, money is the root of all evil. But that is NOT what the verse says. It says, “the love of money is the root of all evil.” Not the money but the LOVE of it. Money is neither good nor evil. Money is benign, nothing more than a means for bartering. The love of it is an entirely different matter however. You see, when you love something you cannot get enough of it. You pursue your love, forsake all for your love, even die for your love. If your love is money than your heart is set in a direction that causes you to abandon other things, even faith. How can this be good? It can't be, as it is at the root of all that denies God and His Word. Hardly anyone believes this, but it is the truth.

Verses 11&12

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

We should flee from anything that even remotely resembles love for anything other than our God and His Word.

I John 2:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Simply put, you cannot love the world and the Father simultaneously. The following expounds more on why this is so:

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

A wonderful manner of speech known to the people from the lands and times of the Bible helps us to understand further. Service here in the oxidant is quite different than that found in the Mid-East. The servant of antiquity is of special note in this regard as the master used hand gestures not words to convey his desire.

Psalms 123:2

Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her

mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

We dare not take our eyes off the Master for fear of missing the command. If our focus is divided in any endeavor we shall suffer degraded performance. When it comes to something as important as submitting to the Will of God, our utmost is demanded. What we give our all to will receive just that, our all. God and His Son deserve our very best ALL the time. My mom had a wall hanging that read, "I put all my eggs in one basket and gave the basket to God." I suggest we do the same. But we must remain vigilant and beware the trap laid for us in the senses realm.

I John 2:16, 17

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

God puts our over-desires in two categories here. The "flesh" and "eyes".

The "flesh" is referring to our old man sin nature, that which we received from Adam. This is worldly, of man and not God. The "eyes" encompasses both what we see physically and imagine mentally. Lust is of course over-desire and a driving force capitalized upon by our Adversary. The unrenewed, selfish, carnal nature which desires to have, without concern for God or man. It is self-serving and self-gratifying and unrepentant. The lust of the eyes lead unrepentant man to want everything he sees or thinks about. It sort of reminds me of the mailing catalogs that we all get these days. There are things in them

I never knew I needed before receipt and review of aforementioned catalogs. You simply cannot live without some of the very "useful" items you never had use for before. These carnal compulsions are what drive the sales world. Any salesperson can tell you about compulsion buying. There's nothing logical, spiritual or economical about it. You see it, you want it, you love it. Dang it, you're getting it! There's no love of God in that, is there?

As to the pride of life, now there's a contemporary vocation! It's in vogue to boast and flaunt oneself these days. Can you say repugnant? This pride is an empty, insolent, impious bragging that despises the Law of God. Yet, people idolize the very concept. Of course, no spiritually minded person behaves in such a manner. This however, is the way of the world and as such is adored by the worldly. You and I desire the way of God. We adore Him. Therefore, all our boasting is of Him.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ [he means he's proud of it]; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

II Corinthians 10:17

But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

I Corinthians 3:21a

Therefore let no man glory in men.

Psalms 34:2

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

Psalms 44:8

In God we boast all the day long,
and praise thy name for ever.
Selah.

And lest we forget:

Ephesians 2:8&9

For by grace are ye saved
through faith; and that not of
yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man
should boast.

For those who suppose that gain is
godliness, consider the following:

Proverbs 23:4 & 5

Labour not to be rich: cease
from thine own wisdom.

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon
that which is not? for *riches*
certainly make themselves
wings; they fly away as an eagle
toward heaven.

Young's Literal renders the above
as:

Proverbs 23:4 & 5

Labour not to make wealth,
From thine own understanding
cease, Dost thou cause thine eyes
to fly upon it? Then it is not.

For wealth maketh to itself
wings, As an eagle it flieth to the
heavens.

And from the Bible in Basic
English:

Proverbs 23:4 & 5

Take no care to get wealth; let
there be an end to your desire
for money.

Are your eyes lifted up to it? it is
gone: for wealth takes to itself

wings, like an eagle in flight up to heaven.

We have all experienced this
phenomena, have we not? Just when
you think you have a few "bucks,"
another bill materializes. Today it
seems that someone has their "hand
out" at every turn. The irony of it is
this same devouring lures the ravaged
to pursue a life-style supported by the
devoured. Oh yes! That's why the
moniker of consumer. Don't you find it
abhorrent that even in the midst of
war with all its ravages, death and
agony society remains so absorbed
with the economy? It's a sad day when
consumer index factors are of greater
concern than human suffering! But
then the love of money is the root of all
evil!

Before I go any further it's important
that we recognize God's desire for our
well-being. Clearly He wants His
people to be blessed in every way,
including materially.

Genesis 13:2

And Abram *was* very rich in cattle,
in silver, and in gold.

Abraham was not the only man God
promoted who was very rich. There
were many, not the least of which
being Solomon.

I Kings 3:5-14

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to
Solomon in a dream by night: and
God said, Ask what I shall give
thee.

And Solomon said, Thou hast
shewed unto thy servant David my
father great mercy, according as he
walked before thee in truth, and in
righteousness, and in uprightness of
heart with thee; and thou hast kept
for him this great kindness, that
thou hast given him a son to sit on
his throne, as *it is* this day.

And now, O LORD my God, thou
hast made thy servant king instead
of David my father: and I *am but* a
little child: I know not *how* to go
out or come in.

And thy servant *is* in the midst of
thy people which thou hast chosen,
a great people, that cannot be
numbered nor counted for
multitude.

Give therefore thy servant an
understanding heart to judge thy
people, that I may discern between
good and bad: for who is able to
judge this thy so great a people?

And the speech pleased the Lord,
that Solomon had asked this thing.

God said to Solomon, "Ask what I shall
give thee." It is important to note that
material possessions were not among
Solomon's requests. God was so joyful
at what Solomon had asked that He
not only gave him his requests but
riches and honor as well. To this day
the name Solomon is synonymous with
opulence. Solomon's riches are
legendary!

Verses 11-14

And God said unto him, Because
thou hast asked this thing, and hast
not asked for thyself long life;
neither hast asked riches for
thyself, nor hast asked the life of
thine enemies; but hast asked for
thyself understanding to discern
judgment;

Behold, I have done according to
thy words: lo, I have given thee a
wise and an understanding heart;
so that there was none like thee
before thee, neither after thee shall
any arise like unto thee.

And I have also given thee that
which thou hast not asked, both
riches, and honour: so that there

shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

We can conclude therefore, that it is not wrong to be prosperous. The problems lie not in possession but in perspective. What a man deems important is the issue, not what a man owns.

Matthew 19:16-22

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God:* but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away

sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

The young man's possessions kept him from following Jesus. Obviously, his material gain held more for him than a life of following the Master. This would appear to be a case of his property owning him rather than he it.

Luke 14:33

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

This does not mean that you cannot own anything. It does mean that nothing you own can come between you and your obedience to God's Word. That would include how you make your living. In other words, the manner you employ to bring material substance to your life must NEVER be a partition between you and your involvement with the things of God. We should all be willing to drop in an instant ANYTHING that stands between us and Him. I've been told far too frequently that the job hindering the individuals involvement in Christian activities was given them by God. I want you to know that my mama didn't raise a fool. Furthermore, I have the spirit of God. Does God want you to prosper? Of course He does! But He would not give you something that would hinder you spiritually.

II Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth [on active service] entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier [enlisted to share the plan].

You cannot live God's plan if you are entangled in the affairs of life, let alone share God's plan with others. Before any of us can share God's Gospel, we should be doing our level

best to live it. Those who talk it but not live it are hypocrites. Consequently, we cannot allow the web of materialism woven by the world to entangle us.

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The Weymouth translation is:

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that in the foot-race the runners all run, but that only one gets the prize? You must run like him, in order to win with certainty.

But every competitor in an athletic contest practices abstemiousness in all directions. They indeed do this for the sake of securing a perishable wreath, but we for the sake of securing one that will not perish.

That is how I run, not being in any doubt as to my goal. I am a boxer who does not inflict blows on the air, but I hit hard and straight at my own body and lead it off into slavery, lest possibly, after I have

been a herald to others, I should myself be rejected.

The Apostle Paul did not want to be rejected from the competition of eternity. He not only spoke the Word, he lived it. In any honest sporting event every contestant is held accountable to the rules. Paul was honest, he expected the same thing of himself that he expected of others. Live the Word, speak the Word. None of us are above God's rules!

We have no need when we walk with God and do His Will. He sees to everything.

Psalms 37:25

I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Luke 12:32

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

II Corinthians 9:6-15

But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

This passage puts material abundance into perspective by virtue of the tithe. God gives us the seed to sow AND multiplies it when sown. It is a clear recognition on the part of the tither as to the true source of abundance, material or otherwise.

Proverbs 11:24 & 25

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Quite the paradox, isn't it? How can a man have more when he gives away what he has? And how can a man have less when he holds on to what he has?

The answer is spiritual but also simple. It's all in the category of trust.

The individual who truly trusts the Father will do as the Word says in regard to finances. The individual who trusts the material world will tenaciously hold on to it and that in resistance to God's Word. The end result for both is the opposite of what the senses would expect. The giver has more, the hoarder less. Furthermore, the giver is not indebted to his possessions. He is free and in debt to naught but God.

Mark 8:34-ff

And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

You see, it's all a question of perspective. We hold on to that which we cherish. No one wants to lose the things they love and trust.

Psalms 91:14-ff

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I

will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: *I will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Nothing in the material realm can make that promise!

Psalms 13:5

But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

Psalms 22:4

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

Psalms 28:7

The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Psalms 31:14

But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.

Psalms 33:21

For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

Isn't that wonderful! Who that trusts in the material world can make these claims?

I am reminded of a very sobering passage:

Psalms 49:6-ff

They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

(For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.

For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Their inward thought *is, that* their houses *shall continue* for ever, *and* their dwelling places to all generations; they call *their* lands after their own names.

Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

This their way *is* their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

Phew! What a record!!! If that doesn't get your attention, I don't know what will.

Once again, let's consider this stunning truth:

I Timothy 6:9

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Beware the trap of materialism! Always be mindful of what God did for you and how He did it.

I Peter 1:18-ff

Forasmuch *as* ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that* ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

We are not saved by material gain, nor are we made holy by it. No amount of success or wealth can aid us in acquiring an intimate relationship with the Father. It is only through the completed work of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are made whole. We are holy in our walks to the degree that we adhere faithfully to His Word and only because of His grace and mercy are we able to do that. Were it not for God's fathomless love, we would be without the wherewithal to do anything at all, spiritually or otherwise. We can in and of our own selves do nothing, individually or collectively.

Nevertheless, the following rings as true today as when the Apostle John penned it so very long ago:

III John 2-4

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

There is no denying the veracity of God's desire for our health and prosperity. However, it is obligatory that we endeavor to do that which He finds pleasing.

Verses 3 & 4

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

How could we love the blessings more than the Blessor? It's unthinkable! If we desire to continue in an actively intimate relationship with our God we must avoid becoming infatuated with worldly things. The trap of materialism bogs us down so that we cannot do the things we so ardently desire to do.

Our perspective in these matters does not negate the Will of God. It does however, affect OUR keeping of His Will. Being in a place well-pleasing to Him is the best place to be.

God never intends for any of us to be downtrodden or poor. Man's religion would like for us to think of God as stingy and cruel. Nothing could be further from the Truth. He wants you to have everything in life that you need. All that's in the creation belongs to Him, why wouldn't He want His children to enjoy a rich life? It has never been a question of His denying us the good of life. But it has been a pattern with man to trust the material world more than God and His Word.

It happens then that some of us forget Him when all is going well and accuse Him when it's not. My prayer in this regard is like the following proverb:

Proverbs 30:7-9

Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

The Apostle Paul penned these verses:

Philippians 4:12 & 13

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

God wants to take care of you. He loves you and gave His Son to die for you. Nothing cost more and He never thought to spare the expense. You are worth something to God and He values you greatly. He will meet your needs as you ask and sometimes even when you don't. He is Almighty God and all that is good is continually at His disposal.

Philippians 4:19

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Your need is the same as mine. We need to walk and talk daily with the Majesty of eternity. We need our Heavenly Father and we need Him every minute of every day. Anything that encroaches on this is worthless!
