

Sunday, October 29, 2023 am

CLOSER TO GOD (58)
Challenges (4)
The Danger of Materialism (3)

The past few weeks we have been addressing worldliness and materialism as challenges to efforts to draw closer to God. Materialism is a serious concern for us as we live in such an affluent society. Materialism is the pursuit of material things as one's form of security. It is putting material possessions over striving to draw closer to God. We have seen passages of warning and examples in scripture of materialism. Last week we addressed some of the dangers of materialism. We discussed how money is morally neutral. It is about attitude and how you use it. We also talked about debt and materialism, how it can cause anxiety, how it affects one's character, as well as how materialism can pose a spiritual danger in both homes and churches. Today, we want to address some things we can do to avoid materialism, as we strive to draw closer to God.

- I. ***First realize that having possessions and being wealthy is not wrong –***
 - a. Last week we talked about both the wealthy and the poor, noting that both can be materialistic and both can be godly. But many would have those with wealth to feel guilty because they have more than someone else. That is NOT a healthy attitude! The godly attitude has a godly perspective about money (which we will address in a few moments).
 - b. God created this world for us to enjoy! 1 Timothy 4:4 – nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; James 1:17 – every good gift and perfect gift is from above..., 1 Timothy 6:17 – notes that the rich are to trust in the living God “*who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*”
 - c. The Bible gives numerous examples of the godly who were wealthy. Abraham, David, Job, Barnabas (willing to give it up), Joseph of Arimathea, etc.
 - d. This is about perspective. I MUST understand money and what it can do to me, both positive and negative.
- II. ***We need to be content and thankful.***
 - a. Philippians 4:11-12 – Paul was content in every circumstance.
 - b. 1 Timothy 6:6-10.
 - c. Do NOT covet – that is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Covetousness by its very nature is the opposite of contentment.
 - d. Hebrews 13:5, *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
- III. ***Have a proper perspective of our possessions and money.***
 - a. ***Learn and appreciate that which is of real value –***
 - i. Proverbs 16:16, *How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.*
 - ii. Matthew 6:19-21 speaks of our treasure in heaven.
 - iii. Galatians 5:22-23 describes the qualities of “the fruit of the Spirit” noting “*Against such there is no law.*” There are many things more valuable than “stuff”.
 - iv. Psalm 19:10 – the “law of the LORD” is more to be desired than gold.
 - v. 1 Peter 1:7 – your faith is much more precious than gold that perishes
 - vi. AND there is one more thing (actually many) that we will note at the end of this lesson).
 - vii. The point is, there are things far more valuable than material things and they are available to all.
 - viii. BTW, we could add to this list things in this world like family and good friends, good health, freedom (to worship), laughter, etc.

- b. **Realize that material possessions are temporary** –1 John 2:15-17, 2 Peter 3:10 tells us that the elements will melt with fervent heat. Matthew 6:19-21 warns of the deteriorating nature of material things. We can learn from the example of Job who when he lost everything said, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.* (Job 1:21-22)
 - c. **Realize that rarely do things satisfy** – related to the temporal nature of material things, the problem with materialism is it is never enough! If you are trusting in “uncertain riches” (1 Timothy 6:17), you will always desire more.
 - d. **Realize that a materialistic attitude can jeopardize your soul** – again, Luke 12:16-21 – the parable of the rich fool; Matthew 6:24 – you CANNOT serve 2 masters. When Jesus spoke with the rich young ruler, He was CLEARLY giving him a choice – Matthew 19:21. His money was a danger to his soul! You have to make a choice – this is not about which is better. God and materialism are total opposites when it comes to choosing WHICH one you will serve.
 - e. **Realize that we are God’s stewards** –
 - i. What we have actually belongs to Him. Deuteronomy 10:14, *Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it.*
 - ii. Psalm 24:1, *The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*
 - iii. Psalm 50:10-12, *For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.*
 - iv. A faithful steward will faithfully manage all that he has (). 1 Peter 4:10, *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* 1 Corinthians 4:2, speaking of himself, Paul acknowledges that it is required of stewards that one be found faithful.
 - v. Luke 12:18-21 describes the “rich fool” who stored up treasures and forgot about God.
 - vi. THIS will help us have a proper perspective of our moneys.
- IV. **Think properly of yourself** – do NOT attach your self-worth to your possessions.
- a. Romans 12:3 tells us not to think MORE highly of ourselves than we ought to think. But note there that it does not say we should view ourselves highly.
 - b. Yes we realize who we are before God (unworthy, etc.), but we must also realize that God DOES value us – He sent Jesus to die for us (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15 – Paul noted that Christ came to save sinners, Romans 5:6-8 – Christ died for the ungodly – us! etc.)
 - c. Psalm 39:13-16 – David declared that I am fearfully and wonderfully made...
 - d. Matthew 6:25-26 - Don’t worry, your are of more value than birds and grass to God. NOTE: At least 3 times Jesus emphasized this idea – Matthew 10:29-31, 12:11-12, etc.
 - e. When you learn to think properly about yourself, you don’t need stuff to prop you up. Also, you don’t need drugs, harmful behaviors, or anything else.
- V. **Beware of the dangers of debt** –
- a. Proverbs 22:7. Rarely will debt solve a problem. AND it typically creates MORE problems, some of which we have noted.
 - b. Romans 13:8 – Owe no one anything...; This leads to the question – is it wrong to have debt? Not necessarily.
 - c. Consider Proverbs 6:1-5 in the midst of Solomon’s discourse about wisdom, *My son, if you become surety for your friend, If you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; For you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; Plead with your friend. Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.* NOTE: How does a gazelle deliver himself from a

lion? He RUNS like there is no tomorrow! If you have debt, it ought to be your highest priority to get rid of it!

- VI. **Use what you have for good.** Think about glorifying God with your resources.
- a. How often do scriptures call for us to be benevolent and concerned about others.
 - i. What the church can do is limited – cf. 1 Timothy 5:16, Acts 11:27-30
 - ii. But what we can do as individuals is much broader in scope. How often does scripture emphasize our need to be concerned about the poor? 1 Timothy 6:17-19,
 - iii. 1 John 3:17 – especially our brethren (but not limited to that). Also James 2:14-18, etc.
 - iv. Romans 12:6-8 speaks of giving as a gift to be used for God (with liberality).
 - v. Matthew 6:1-3 – do not sound the trumpet.
 - vi. Hebrews 13:16 – do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
 - vii. Proverbs 22:9 - *He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor. Proverbs 19:17, He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given. Proverbs 14:31, He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.*
 - viii. Galatians 2:10, *They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*
 - ix. Acts 10:1-2 – Cornelius was recognized for among other things giving alms to the poor.
 - b. Use it to help the Lord's work - Support the furtherance of the gospel – 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Philippians 4:15-17, etc. If we are faithful stewards, whatever we are blessed with determines how much we can do. This is not to be dismissive of what we can with little, but it is a fact that with more, we can do more – support the preaching of the gospel in other places, use available resources to promote the gospel in our community, help the needy within our number, etc.
 - c. Use it to take care of yourself giving you the best advantage to serve God. With contentment, do what you can afford. Included in this is familial responsibilities - 1 Timothy 5:8, Husbands are to provide for their families, etc.
 - d. Save for the future – Proverbs 21:20, 13:22, 10:4-5, *He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.*
 - e. This is a godly way to put possessions in proper perspective. As you freely and generously give of your possessions, you are reminding yourself that this life is about more than getting everything you want. Proverbs 3:9-10, *Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*
- VII. **Where is your treasure?** Matthew 6:19ff. NEVER forget this! WHO is your priority! Remember, we are to be seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)

And thus we see how materialism can be a danger to our pursuit of relationship with God. It is a challenge that each of us WILL face, especially in our affluent society. But as we have seen, it is something you can overcome. You will notice that many of the steps associated with dealing with materialism have to do with our attitude and perspective about what is really important. I remind you of 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 which calls for us to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” This MUST include how we approach our possessions. I conclude with the word of Jesus from Matthew 16:26, *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* What about you? What is the most important thing to you in this life? Think about it!