

The Christian View Of The World And Wealth

Introduction

We live in a decadent temporal world today and we are bombarded with different philosophies and we need to have the correct worldview as a Christian. Firstly, **the world is not an eternal habitat for a believer for his citizenship is in heaven** (Philippians 3:20). The Christian and the philosophy of this world are incompatible because of the fallen nature of man. Some are concerned for the pollution of the environment, but are we equally concerned for the moral and spiritual fallout over the fall of man and the desperate need for God as our Saviour.

Secondly, **Christians are not to love the world because of what the world stands for.** Love for the world is irreconcilable with love for the Father for friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). The Apostle John says, "*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. 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.*" (1 John 2:15-16).

Beware of these temptations that appeals to man's fallen nature. It refers to the basic depraved nature of fallen man that makes him or her vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one.

Thirdly, **the seductions of the world entices us to fall into sin.** The eyes are the gateway into the mind. Attractive financial instruments can appeal and entice us with impressive prospective returns. This stirs up the covetousness of the heart and the lust of the eyes which can manifest itself in financial pursuits of inordinate proportions that are contrary to God's Word. The lust of the eyes pressures us to desire and think as the world thinks. It is to see things in the light of the world rather than with the eyes of God. The Psalmist prayed, "*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way*" (Psalm 119:37). Our eyes can get us into trouble. When we are greedy and crave for more of the worldly things than what God has allowed for us, we can be ensnared into many troubles. The pride of life includes vainglory and self-indulgence. One who tries to out-do others in spending and increasing our net worth in stocks, shares, bonds, gold, possessions, like flashy cars and high-end properties may end up taking on more credit and mortgages than we can afford. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life do not come from the Father (1 John 2:15-16). These things are of the world and are totally contrary to the Word of God.

Fourthly, **Christians should not love the world because of where the world is headed.** John says in 1 John 2:17, "*The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*" Some are gullible enough to believe that the present world system is absolutely reliable and safe including our financial assets and our worldly possessions as the Bible teaches us not to trust in acceptance ephemeral riches. The only sure thing about the present world system is that it is not going to be here forever (Isaiah 40:8). Only those who are saved by grace in the will of God will abide forever with the Lord in heaven. Hence, believers should not have an affection for this world, we are to lay our hearts above, and must be ready to break camp literally and be prepared to leave this world if we are called home suddenly (Psalm 90:12).

Sovereignty of God

It has been almost 10 years since the financial upheaval in 2008. Even in this crisis, God is sovereign in all His mighty power to awaken the people of the world of the unreliable nature of possessions. He has opened His gracious hand to shower us with many blessings, and the generally, in good times the economies thrive and so do we. But at times God may will it otherwise, and some can be in deep financial difficulty. Those who are adversely affected by the crisis may then ask : Why has God allowed this to affect me? What is His purpose this financial upheaval? What good can there be in having our pay cut, failed investments or being retrenched or jobless, or a decrease in financial net worth?

Could it be that God is using such upheaval to reconsider your priorities and to refine your faith in Him so that you may come forth as gold (Job 23:10). It may also be His training programme to prepare you for higher spiritual service. Or perhaps it may be a divine messenger from God, sent to teach us how to glorify God in our infirmities so that the power of Christ and his mercy and grace may rest upon us (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In the midst of despair, a ray of hope shone brightly in Jeremiah's heart – *"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: Great is Thy faithfulness"* (Lamentations 3:21-23). Jeremiah had rightly recognised that ultimately it was God who is sovereign in His way, even though he was cast into prison for a season. But this did not cause him to doubt God's goodness to him. Though it seemed as if he was bearing God's awful wrath, God was with him to preserve him and he was faithful to Him to the end.

Peril of Avarice

The Bible says that *"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"* (1 Timothy 6:10). **An almost lunatic and obsessive crave after wealth can possibly lead to a compromise our faith or values and cause us to suffer spiritually.** Money is assumed by many to be the power to harness the resources of the world, to get whatever we want. An avaricious selfish spirit is often the "ruthless and insatiable god of this world" for many. The truth is that the richer one is, the easier it is to feel he / she does not need God's help, mercy, guidance, provision and care. For many, it is empowering for a selfish independence from God but a constant fellowship with and the fear of God, prayer and submission to the will of God are marks of true spirituality.

Money may bring one temporal pleasures, fun and physical comfort in the short run. **The high value some may place on personal comfort and pleasure for ourselves in the world may be contrary to the will of God concerning us.** Those who crave for a better life in a bigger house, a bigger car, an expensive country club membership may not be ready to obey God when He speaks to us. The still small voice of God is snuffed out by the loud jarring voices of pleasures, the deceitfulness of riches and cares of the world. This has the potential to choke our lives as the thorns did as pointed out by our Lord in Matthew 13:18-23 in the parable of the sower and the seed.

We need to prayerfully pay attention to God's Word and will consider Christ and cry to God with all our hearts. When we feel secure in our resources, we tend not to seek nor cry out to God, or focus on God's Word or prayer. We should be willing to give up our ambitions and riches to honour and serve the purposes of God if we really want to be obedient to God (1 Timothy 6:17-20).

Biblically-Based Financial Management

Money is not a necessary evil but the inordinate love of it is. **Whether money is a good or bad influence depends on our approach to it.** Some of God's servants in the Old Testament were blessed of God materially in Job, Abraham, Daniel, Solomon and David but they were not obsessed with their wealth. Great material wealth may or may not be an integral part of that life God has for us and we are to be content with what we have. We need contentment and sound and prudent Christian money management for ultimately, a believer's financial stewardship is to be accountable to God one day (Romans 14:12).

Paul said that the love of money has corrupted and twisted the lives of many people and is a root cause of much evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Those who are obsessed with or who strive to be rich desperately at all cost have often brought to themselves and others untold agonies and miseries. A survey was done among those who had won lotteries in the UK and it was found that all of them were worst off ultimately.

The Bible has more than 2,300 verses on how to handle wealth and possessions. The book of Proverbs by King Solomon, an inerrant guidebook covering numerous subjects also contains financial guidance to help us manage money wisely. Study it to get some sound Christian financial principles it offers.

Remember that **money makes a good servant, a poor master and an abominable god**. It can separate us from our families and God if we find ourselves caught up in an inordinate crave or insatiable desire for more possessions. Beware that wealth can intoxicate and enslave ourselves and we are rendered powerless under its influence. So Solomon says, "*Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom*" (Proverbs 23:4).

The apostle Paul gave a good reason for us to be content with what we have or do not have, "*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*" (1 Timothy 6:7-9).

Christian Stewardship of Wealth

Believers must take care not to let the quest for wealth become overly important to us that it displace God and His will for our lives. King Solomon in Proverbs states that we should honour God first who owns everything. "*Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine*" (Proverbs 3:9-10). It is biblical that we joyfully return a portion of what we receive to the one who supplies our needs with thanksgiving and be willing to surrender ourselves our talents and substance to Him. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*" The biblical injunction to keep to the right spiritual priorities is clearly stated by our Lord Jesus Christ who tells us, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). If we put God and spiritual matters first, then we can count on Him for the other necessities of life. Philippians 4:13, 19 says, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*"

Acknowledging and surrendering to the One who owns all helps us keep our physical possession in their proper perspective. **We must not allow material possessions to become so important to us that pursuing them dominates our lives to the detriment of our spiritual development and adversely affects our stewardship and service for Christ and our covenant family life.**

Conclusion

The litmus test of a man's character is how he views and relates to God and the world, builds up and spends his time and uses His wealth before God in this life which will affect the next. Let us get our priorities right and put our affections in the heavenly kingdom to come and not on this ephemeral world that will be destroyed one day by God in His divine judgement.

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