

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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A CONVENIENT SEASON

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. (Acts 24:24-25)

Do you put things off because it is not a convenient time? I would venture to guess that we have all done this with something. Maybe it is cleaning the house or washing the car. Putting off earthly things is trivial; what is a problem is if we put

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off studying and following God. That is far from trivial. We all know the saying, “Why do today what we can put off until tomorrow?” What if tomorrow never comes and we have not given God the time that we should?

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (Jas. 4:13-17)

We do not have the ability to see into the future. We cannot predict what will happen with 100% accuracy. Our life here is temporary and we must make sure that we spend our time here following God and not dwelling on earthly treasures. We have probably heard this a lot over the years, but we do not always follow it. Remember what was said in the last verse of the previous passage: if we know to do good and do not do it, it is a sin. “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Luke 12:34).

This is basically saying if you have treasure in earthly possessions, that is what you care about. But if you have treasure in God and following him, your heart is truly with him. A parable given to us about the rich fool further cements this thought.

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 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. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no

room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:13-21)

The man's treasures were in all that he had and in building bigger and better places to keep his possessions. He was so focused on these things that he forgot to be "rich toward God." A little later Jesus tells us of a rich ruler that wants to inherit eternal life.

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (Luke 18:18-25)

The ones who are rich are tasked with doing good--with making sure that their riches do not stand in the way of doing God's will.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do

good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

We must be ready at any time to be with God. We cannot just wait for when it is convenient to follow Him; we must always follow him. We must always find time to study and to immerse ourselves in His word. If we wait until it is convenient, we are risking our chance at salvation and eternal life.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. (Luke 12:35-40)

If we only hear God's word on Sunday mornings at church services and do not think about it any other time, are we truly living the life that we should? It is one thing to hear God's word, but it is a different thing to live what we hear. This can apply to what we do, how we speak, and what we think about.

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It is easy to get caught up in all that happens around us, but we have to make sure that we are doing things in a way that is pleasing to God and that we do not do something that is against His will. We should always be living for God and not just waiting for a convenient time to live for Him.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (Jas. 1:22-25)

This is an important passage. It shows that we truly need to not just hear, but to do. We show our faith by following God and by doing His will. Our works are to follow God's commandments and to do good. Without that we are not living in a way that is pleasing to God.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed

unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (Jas. 2:14-26)

We have to live for God, always striving to do His will. We cannot wait for a time that is better and more convenient. If you are not doing this, what are you waiting for? Do not be like Felix saying that you will follow God when it is convenient. Convenient may never come.

A. D.

SPIRITUAL RICHES

Do we sometimes worry about being “poor”, that is, having a lack of riches? Do we try to think of ways to make money and then how to make MORE money? I am afraid too many of us do. Even members of the Lord’s church worry to the extent that they may be creating ulcers for themselves. Some people think of nothing else but “I need more money.” God’s people should not be possessed with such thoughts, but it does happen. We all would like to have an extra dollar to spend on a loved one or to make our lives a little easier. But is it right for us to be so preoccupied about such things?

Let’s ask ourselves a few questions first. What if the job I have right now doesn’t pay top dollar? Can I live with that? It pays just enough for me to survive on. After paying all the bills, I never have any leftover to put into savings. Now, is that really all that bad? Think of those who make even less than I do and yet, somehow they are still alive. Some folks don’t even have a job! So it is truly fair for me to complain?

And what if my income is such that I cannot eat steak or pizza or seafood at my next meal? Would it really kill me to have a dinner of rice and beans? As a matter of fact, I don’t believe

many of us would die if we missed our next meal! Try it! So how can we complain about the quality or quantity of any food we eat when others are starving and going hungry before our very eyes? Surely we have been spoiled beyond measure.

The point to be made is that there are more important things to be concerned about besides physical riches. That was the key message Christ tried to convey in Matthew 6:25 when He said,

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

He did not say to give up everything we owned and then God would supply all our wants, although God could do that. He did not say for us to fold our hands and do nothing and God would provide our every command. Neither did Jesus say for us to stand back and watch God magically fill our tables with our favorite foods. That is the message the lazy man wants to hear. Instead our Lord is telling us that we should not lose any sleep over the temporal objects of this life. “Take no thought”, that is , don’t worry or be overly concerned with our physical needs because they are NOT the most significant things. Our spiritual life, i.e., our soul is what matters the most!

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mat. 16:26)

Therefore, let us be encouraged not to worry about material matters like money. It certainly will not be the end of the world if we don’t get that dream house or car or job raise we always wanted. If we must die poor men, let it only be in the physical sense. The key is to die rich in the spiritual sense. If a man is to make it to heaven, he must be IN Christ where all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3). What truly counts is if a man is rich in Christ (Eph. 3:8), in good works (1 Tim. 6:18), and in faith (Jas. 2:5).

Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16? Most people today envy the rich man since he had everything

he wanted. Poor Lazarus had to beg for his next meal. Now he had something to worry about, didn't he? But at the conclusion of their lives, whose final outcome turned out better? Evidently Lazarus was rich in the spiritual sense while the rich man had neglected his own soul. In this story we have the lesson that it is far more important to live a righteous and obedient life than to worry about earning physical riches. Lazarus cared more about the spiritual riches and so it must be with us.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which king was saved from death by Abraham's prayer?
2. How old was Joseph when he began serving Pharaoh?
3. When Saul defeated the Amalekites he disobeyed God and took possessions from the land. What was the name of the king he also spared?
4. Who sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord"?
5. In what month of Elisabeth's pregnancy did the angel appear to Mary?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...

And remember last months questions?

1. Which of the twelve sons of Jacob had a name that means "praise"? JUDAH (Gen. 29:35)
2. What is the seventh commandment? THOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY (Exo. 20:14)
3. How many tribes inherited land on the east of Jordan? TWO AND A HALF (Josh. 18:7)
4. In Luke's account of the Beatitudes who does Jesus say the Kingdom of God belongs to? THE POOR (Luke 6:20)
5. What proportion of his goods did Zacchaeus give away to the poor? HALF (Luke 19:8)