

The Christian And The World (Part 4)

Satan's Deceptions

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 10-Jan-98; Sermon #321

The first sermon of the series that I am in right now has clearly established the source of this world and showed that there is a very decided "them and us" cleavage shown in the Bible between God and His children on one side, and the world on the other. We saw that the word *cosmos*, which is translated "world" in the King James Version (and I think most of the other versions as well), is used to indicate mankind subject to the present order of things. *Cosmos* is seen in the Bible as evil, transient, worthless, and under the power of the evil one; and thus all, every single one of us, in the church or out of the church, has lived, as Ephesians 2:2 says, "According to the course of this world." Let us read that.

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you [brethren in the church] has he quickened [made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past you walked [you walked in sin; I walked in sin] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

At the beginning of this sermon we are going to take a look at this word "course," because it is very interesting. It is translated from the Greek *aion*. Transliterated it is *aion* in English. The King James Version frequently translated this word "world," just like *cosmos*, and so this phrase could literally be translated, "according to the world of this world." Technically it would not be wrong to say it in that way. So neither "world," which is how older Bibles translate it, or "age," as the newer translations render that word, is wrong. However, in this particular case, I believe that the King James Version has done the best job and translated it "course."

A course is a path or a way. It is a means; it is the act of moving from one point to another, and thus without even thinking about it, we say "race course." We are here near Laurel, Maryland, where there is a race course, and the horses go through an act of going through the starting gate to the finish line. They are running a course. We say "golf course." A golf course goes from the first hole through the eighteenth, and you follow that. You are following a path or a way. A "water course" is another way it is rendered. In addition to that, a course means an accustomed procedure, or a chosen manner of conducting one's self. You can also say, "This is the best course of action." It also means an ordered process.

There is a man whose name you may have run across, if you do any researching at all in commentaries. His name is Trench. This man is very highly regarded in the world of Biblical scholarship, and you can hardly read a commentary without this man being eventually quoted in regard to word definitions. I want you to listen to this man's definition of *aion*. It is a little bit long, so concentrate while I am reading this to you.

Aion is all that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world which is impossible to see and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being our moral or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably, exhale.

I am going to give you my short analysis of what he said: “*Aion* is the ever present and vague immaterial spirit realm that our lives are surrounded by and lived in.”

There is another man also highly regarded, like Trench, and his name is Bengel. I believe that he was German. Bengel adds this. This is the same word, but a lot shorter definition and a little bit more pointed. “*Aion* [course] is the subtle informing spirit of the cosmos or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.”

That is a bombshell, because what we are looking at, here, is what has made you and me what we were before conversion. “The subtle informing spirit of the cosmos, or world of men, who are living alienated and apart from God.”

The course of this world is the *zeitgeist* that I mentioned at the very beginning. It is the spirit of the age, and the spirit of the age—any given age—is not always exactly the same. Regardless of when a person lives, the spirit of the age, the *zeitgeist*, is always anti-God. Always. We grow up in it, and it makes us what we are. It is the informing spirit of the age.

Another man, also German, whose name is Wuest, gives this definition in his commentary:

To distinguish between *aion* and *cosmos*, *cosmos* gives the overall picture of mankind. *Cosmos* is mankind within an ordered system, but alienated from God during all history, and *aion* represents any distinct age or period of human history as marked out from another by particular characteristics.

I will illustrate the last part of that. Mankind sees this and so mankind, usually historians, assign names or titles to particular periods of history. Thus, we have the Victorian Age. Thus we have the Elizabethan Age. Thus we have the Renaissance. Thus we have the Dark Ages. In each one of those periods, there is a dominating spirit, particular characteristics, but they are all anti-God. Some of us have lived through the Horse and Buggy Age all the way up to the Technological Age—to the age of rocket ships to the moon, rocket ships to Jupiter, and on and on.

Just in the last 150 or so years we have gone from an age that was totally dominated by agriculture to an age that is dominated by the Industrial Revolution. Then came the Atomic Age, and then we have come up into the Technological Age—the age of super communication that is now available to all of mankind. And so the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age at any given time, has its own particular characteristics. But as Ephesians 2:2 is telling us, every single one of them, regardless of when mankind has lived, is anti-God, because they all have their source in the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. You and I lived in it, worked in it, played in it, and have been entertained in it from the time we were born until the time that we grew up. The age that most shaped and formed you might have been somewhat different from the age that informed me and shaped me into what I am today. Regardless, they are all anti-God.

Using Roget's Thesaurus, I came up with some more synonyms that will help you understand this word *aion*, course, spirit, and so on. Listen to this: tendency, thoughts, disposition, character, nature, makeup, bent, slant, frame of mind, attitude, spirit, inclination, mindset, perspective.

Let us take that and try to understand it this way. “Wherein in time past you walked [conducted your life] according to the disposition of this world, according to the character of this world, according to the nature of this world, according to the makeup of this world, according to the bent, according to the slant, according to the frame of mind, according to the attitude, according to the spirit.”

You see, the phrase is best understood by taking it as a whole. The King James Version is a very close literal translation. Now let me give you that from three modern paraphrases, and you will see that they caught the essence of the meaning. Even though it is not a literal translation, the people who translated it did catch the essence of what is being said here.

The Phillips Translation: “You drifted along on the stream [*aion*, course] of this world's ideas of living.”

That is pretty good.

The Living Bible: “You went along with the crowd and were just like all the others.”

That is pretty clear too, but that is exactly what it means.

The New English Bible: “You followed the way of this present world order, and the source is the prince of the power of the air.”

Brethren, this is the spirit from which we must be converted, and that same spirit is still motivating us when we are acting, as the Bible calls it, “carnal[ly],” or “according to the flesh.”

I am going to give you a recent personal example. I was accused of saying that a certain man is demon-possessed. That is not at all true. What I did say was what this person said was demonic. Let us understand what the Bible shows we are capable of, even though we are converted. Were those people in I Corinthians converted? Paul called them carnal. Yes, they were converted people, but they were not acting like a converted person. They were acting carnally.

We are going to go back to Genesis 1:31.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

By the time this was stated, Adam and Eve were already created; and they had the nature that God had given to them, and so that nature is included within the scope of the “very good.” Adam and Eve's spirit, their nature, was very good. Yet in Ephesians 2, the human nature is there described as being evil, walking according to Satan. The conclusion has to be that human nature became evil. It was not created evil by God. It became evil, and to this day it begins to become evil after each person is born, through contact with the same spirit that influenced Adam and Eve to turn from God.

Every one of you knows that when a little baby is born, we look upon it as being the very

epitome of purity. We know that everything from that point is going to be downhill. We know that. It is almost built within us. Well, Mr. Armstrong used to put it this way: He felt that all of us are born with a slight pull toward the self, but not with the evil that later develops as we come in contact with the spirit of this world. Evil is not passed on by procreation. It is passed on by the spirit of the age into which a person is born.

Take a little bit of practical advice from me, parents. It is the parent's responsibility to their children to ensure that the right spirit is in the home so that the child can be nurtured by it. Mr. Armstrong put it this way one time. He said, "Parents, you are your children's strongest defense against Satan." Mr. Armstrong was saying that it is our responsibility to defend our children from the spirit of this world by creating within our own family atmosphere the right kind of spirit that we are getting from God so that the love of God is flowing through us to our children. Probably none of us has done a very good job of that. We can know what is expected of us, and we have to do what we can to do that, but most of us fall pretty far short of that.

Even the world understands a measure of this, and so they come up with little proverbs like this, "The apple never falls very far from the tree." Do you know what that means? "Like parents, like child." How about this one: "Like father, like son." How about, "I'm gonna be like you, Dad." That is all too true, and what is so sad is that we do not even have to work hard at it for this to occur. It is almost like it is absorbed—and it is, and it comes into us through the spirit of this world.

So this world's Christianity, in its efforts to avoid responsibility for the evil in themselves, has blamed God for us being evil. It is sort of like, "God, why did you create us thus?" He did not. Like Adam and Eve, every single one of us has willingly subjected ourselves to the spirit of this world. They chose.

Do you understand what is being taught to us by God in that vignette that appears there in Genesis the 3rd chapter—that as Adam and Eve did, so would all of their progeny? They chose the way of the knowledge of good and evil. Of course, Romans 5 gives a little bit of information here, for Paul said that everybody has done what Adam and Eve did. We have all followed the same path. God is not responsible for human nature, except that He permitted Satan in the Garden of Eden, and He has permitted Satan to continue to run loose on earth. So we have submitted. We have chosen to submit to Satan. God did not make us this way. We have chosen, as represented by Adam and Eve, to do what they did, and come into the influence of the same evil spirit. So this is what accounts for the evil that is in this world.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately

wicked: who can know it?

God knows it. The question is, are we insightful enough to recognize the wicked that we have the potential to do? "The natural heart of man is desperately corrupt." I believe that this is the way the *Revised Standard Version* has it, or it may say that it is incurably sick. It is so bad, so evil, it cannot be salvaged. It must be completely replaced. This is what conversion (the process that we are now going through) and transformation (that which is going to take place at the resurrection of the dead) is going to accomplish. So conversion, plus transformation, is going to completely remove the spirit of man, the spirit of this world, from us.

Luke 11:13 If you then [these people to whom He was speaking, and of course then He is speaking to you and me] being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Our heavenly Father is perfectly pure. You see, in contrast, we are evil. A little later, in response to being called "good Master," Jesus said, "Why do you call Me good? There is none good but God." He did not even consider Himself to be good. Certainly not good in the way God is good.

Where does that put you and me in comparison to Christ? Jesus called these people evil, and in agreement with what is said in Jeremiah 17:9, it implies thoroughly, not partly. Jesus certainly knew the scriptures He inspired. On the other hand is another reality: Human nature knows how and can do good things, but it is intrinsically evil. An example: Let us pick somebody that we can generally agree on as being thoroughly evil, and probably what might come to our minds might be somebody like Joseph Stalin or Adolph Hitler. We can agree on that.

We will choose Hitler just because I know something about him. Despite his record to the outside world, he is reputed from many sources to have been very kind, generous, big-hearted, good toward children that he knew (the children of family members, the children of his fellows in the German hierarchy)—those kind of things. He was also reputed to have really loved dogs, and he could do good things in relation to them. There is nothing wrong with that. That is good. But just because he was able to do some good things does not make the dominant nature good, and it does not make it acceptable for the Kingdom of God.

So for you and me, we are capable, just like Jesus said, of doing good things, but the nature that is within us is not acceptable for the Kingdom of God. It is thoroughly evil. It must be completely replaced by something that is pure absolutely. People see some of this, and they say that human nature is a mixture of good and evil. But, brethren, as far as that being acceptable for the Kingdom of God, the mixture is evil. James put it this way. He said, "Can a stream put out both salt water and fresh from the same source?" It cannot. It will be salt water. That is the principle that we are working with here.

Some people will say, "Well, yes. Are we not going to go into the Kingdom of God and we are going to be like Him?" The answer to that is...is God a mixture of good and evil? No, He is not. It says in I John 3:1-2 that we are going to be like Him in reference to what we are going to be like when we are in the Kingdom of God. Then we will be like Him. So at its best, human nature is a mixture that cannot be made good.

Where does the evil in man come from? What is its source? I want you to pay particular attention to this next scripture because what is going to be said came from the mouth of a converting person, a person who at the time that he said it was being led by God's spirit.

Matthew 16:20-23 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you." But he turned, and said unto Peter, "Get you behind me, Satan."

I do not know exactly how Jesus said that. I do not know what kind of force was there, but even the fact that He said it must have rocked Peter right back on his heels and hurt him. Well, our Savior never lied. Our Savior never said what was wrong.

Matthew 16:23-24 "Get you behind me, Satan: you are an offence unto me: for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Peter did the speaking, but Jesus spoke to Satan, thus attributing the action—the verbal outburst that was against God—to Satan. Peter, the converting person, the disciple, the

follower of Christ, the one who became an apostle, was the willing conduit that Satan used. Peter acted demoniacally. That is sobering, brethren. He was not demon-possessed, but he acted in that instant as Satan would have in that situation. The spirit of this world was right below the surface.

The question for you and me is: Are you willing to accept that in yourself as being a very distinct possibility—that in your actions and out of your mouth will come words or actions that could be attributed to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience? Are we willing to evaluate our thoughts and acts carefully enough so that something anti-God, either verbally or an activity, does not emerge from just below the surface to dishonor God? Brethren, let us be honest: It happens to every one of us. All of us, including yours truly. When Jesus said we are to deny ourselves, He meant that we are to totally renounce the old nature, which has its source and activation in Satan, in every aspect of life, because it is against God and nature of God.

Let us turn to another familiar section of scripture that the Apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Is he telling you that he had a hard time controlling himself to keep the spirit of this world from puffing out at some time of his life when the right circumstances put him into an attitude, a frame of mind?

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members [And this, brethren, is what I am talking about.] warring against the law of my mind.

It is the spirit of this world—Satan the Devil—that is in us, and the law of our mind, the spirit of God, working in us...

Romans 7:23-24 And bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death [or this body of death]?

See, brethren, conversion is not a simple quick fix. One spirit out—"pop!"—and just like

The Christian and the World (Part 4) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

a video cassette, you put another spirit in. No, it does not work like that. God has not chosen to do things in that regard. He has willed that a different course be taken.

Galatians 5:16-18 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.

What God, in His wisdom, has subjected us to is something—a way of life, a manner of life in which multitudes of choices, experienced in daily life, struggling with, sacrificing for, and willing one's self by faith and love to displace the bad. So any person like Peter can be a conduit for demonic and Satanic things without being possessed.

It is interesting that while I was preparing this sermon, a catalog came to the house from CBD; *Christian Book Distributors*, that contained this advertisement for a book titled *Wresting With Dark Angels*. Listen to this advertisement.

They [the dark angels] are those inner voices of reason that try to convince you that wrong is right, and that evil is good. They are Satan's dark angels, and you fight them every day. Some of today's most respected theologians help you better understand these supernatural forces so that you can combat them effectively and win the war for your mind and soul.

Boy! I had better run out and buy that book. But that fits exactly what I am going through in this sermon. The very purpose of this sermon is to make us more aware of how real and specific this warfare is that we find ourselves involved in. The warfare is against wicked spirits in high places, and they are ever ready to draw the course of this world out of us to accuse us before God. They want to thwart God's purpose in our lives. They want to create walls between us and the ministry and each other. They want to accuse us, and cause us to accuse each other without facts or with few facts, or on the basis of gossip that might be outright slander or heavily weighted with self-justification. They want to create anger, antagonism, suspicion, intolerance, prejudice, impatience, and on and on. Are you aware of what is going on in your life and where the source of many of these bad traits that come out of us are from?

The second sermon showed that though people, especially in the Western world, may call themselves "Christian," and there are undoubtedly many fine, responsible, and

moral people among them, they are in fact not obeying God in major and clear points of doctrine, like keeping the Sabbath or obeying the commandments in their spirit. Paul put it very succinctly. He said that they say that they know God, but in works they deny Him. People can profess, but the proof of the pudding is in what they do, in the way they live their lives, not in what they profess. If the conduct matches the profession, then we have a person who is converted.

That sermon also showed that the difference between us and them—that we have been enabled to know God through God's calling and His giving us of His spirit. This does not make us better, but it certainly enables us and makes us more responsible for making the right choices about how to conduct our lives.

Brethren, judgment is on us now. It is not on Israel. It is not on the world. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth. The Bible is a spiritual book, requiring the spirit of God to put it together properly. Therefore the Bible must be interpreted first and foremost with the spiritual church in mind, and they (Israel) do not have the spirit of God. It is not yet for them. They cannot understand it. Israel does not even know who they are. They cannot really apply it to themselves. The only ones that can apply the Bible to themselves on a consistent basis are those who have the spirit of God. Israel's time will come later.

The third sermon nailed down the fact that though these people claimed to be Christian, their lives are in fact carnal. Their lives are heavily weighted toward the world. They "side" with the world on virtually every occasion involving those elements that take to produce a culture, and they are going to worship the beast. A true Christian will remain loyal to God. Satan, the adversary, on the other hand makes war on those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. So there you have a "them" and "us" very clearly stated. The difference between "us" and "them" is that those who have the spirit of God will be keeping the commands of God, and they will know what the testimony of Jesus Christ is truth, and they will be applying it in their lives. The fruit of that will be that the people of God will "side" with God because they are spiritually minded. They are led by the spirit. Those without the spirit of God, though professing to be Christian, will side with the world, and when push comes to shove, they will worship the beast, not God. What they are will be revealed by the fire of trial.

Brethren, the world, this material and spiritual reality that we live in, is so dominative in its constant presence, that unless there is something, some element or factor that tips the scale toward God, our lives will continue to follow the course of this world despite the fact that we believe. Many in the world believe that there is a God, Creator God, but there is something lacking so that they cannot really follow through. Again, it is God who

The Christian and the World (Part 4) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
comes to our rescue.

Do you know what that factor is? It is the love of God. Let us string a couple of scriptures together, here. Again, these are very familiar. If a person truly believes that he has the Spirit of God, he will then have the love of God, and that will produce a fruit.

John 14:15 If you love me, keep my commandments.

That is such a simple statement, and yet there is so much behind that. Just because a person may see it and read it and agree with it does not mean they can do it. It takes the love of God to keep His commandments. Now why? If a person does not have the love of God, they are defenseless. They will love the world. They will side with the world. They will be loyal to the world. They cannot help themselves. They cannot really make the choice to obey in the way that you and I can. What an advantage we have, brethren! It is awesome!

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

So faith, combined with love, tips the scales toward God, enabling or empowering us to choose His way. Let us go back to the book of Galatians again.

Galatians 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.

Circumcision is nothing. It is nothing. It is a physical rite. A contrast is being shown by Paul. That physical rite is nothing, but faith expressing love is everything. That is the contrast. Nothing. Everything. The "everything" is implied. What Paul is saying, here, I think should not be too difficult to understand, because what he is talking about is the same factor that moves you and me to have more intense concern, sympathy, empathy, and care for our own spouse and our own children and parents above that which we might have for those who are not close to us—people who are merely fellow countrymen.

So what is it that makes you respond to your mate and to your children? There is a connection there, is there not? You have confidence in them, and you have care and concern and sympathy and empathy for them because you love them. Because you

trust them, and you trust their love for you, it moves you to have to do things that you would not do for your next door neighbor, all the way to the most intimate of all relationships, having intercourse. You might like your next door neighbor, but you would never do that with them because that degree of love is not there. What God has given us is not merely love. It is an intensity, a degree of love for Him that this world is not capable of. In some of us, that intensity is so great that we would give our lives for Him.

Romans 5:5 And hope makes not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

Unless there is a strong enough impulse to please God that is dominant in our minds, there is a very good chance that we will flop to the wrong side of the razor's edge more often than not, and as I showed you, this is exactly what God is forcing upon us, if I can put it that way. Paul shows it in Romans 8. John shows it in I John 2. God is forcing us to make changes or choices about Him or between Him and the spirit of this world, and that is very similar and is drawn upon Deuteronomy 30:19, which we will go through in more detail in another sermon. Notice also that God's love is shed abroad in our heart by His Spirit, and so this gives us something in common with Him that enables us to have a relationship with Him and come to know Him through that relationship. You and I may be bound to one another by blood, but we are bound to God and to each other by spirit.

Those to whom we are bound in love—there is a special human regard for them. Those who are bound with one another by the Spirit of God—there is a special spiritual regard for them because that is the impulse, combined with faith, that moves us to act and make the choices between God and this world, so that we will choose God rather than the world. To know God is truly to love Him. I hope you understand what I mean there.

If love is growing even in a human relationship, the more we really know each other, the more intense the love will become and the stronger the bond is. That is something that may take many anniversaries passing in a marriage to come to. We grow in love. The more we come to know God, the more we are going to love Him until we can truly say to Him, "Abba, Father."

We come to know Him for what He is, for the beauty of His mind, for His loving character, for His awesome purpose, for the patience that He has for us, and to come to know our elder brother, Jesus Christ. They are concerned about us with an intensity. Even though I know this intellectually, I cannot really grasp that He could love somebody who is as rotten as I am. I am not kidding. We come to love Him because He

The Christian and the World (Part 4) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

has made us partakers of His divine nature, to help us make the choices necessary to stay on track with His purpose of creating us in His image.

Brethren, we have seen in past sermons a statement Moses made in regard to what we are talking about here. We have seen the Apostle John's statement there in I John 2. We have seen Paul's statement in Romans 8. Now we are going to begin by looking at what Jesus said about this.

So here comes the Boss's statement on how to resist the world, and you are going to find that in many ways He made the same basic statement that these other men made, but what Jesus made is foundational. It is so foundational that He put it in the Sermon on the Mount, where He gave the foundational teaching for the Church of God. It is an overall principle of understanding, of conduct and attitude the disciples of His must have and make use of both as an overall concept and as a practical day-to-day guide. Before we go into this, I am warning you that obedience to Jesus' teachings on this is going to require an exercise both of your faith and of your love. It is not that it is hard to understand, it is just hard to keep on doing it.

We are not going to get very far into Matthew 6, because time is going by, but we will at least start thoughts in your mind, and so we will have a beginning for when I next speak.

Matthew 6:19-24 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. [Where is your heart? Have you examined that lately?] The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! 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. You cannot serve [both] God and mammon.

Before we were called, there were undoubtedly dissatisfactions with ourselves and with the world, but it simply was something that we had to accept because there was no direction as to what we were supposed to do with our lives. In other words, we had no clear understanding why we were born. The result of that was, in a practical day-to-day way, we basically had only material goals. Even if we had known somewhat vaguely about the purpose of life, we still did not know what to do about it. Many of us at that

time had vague feelings about immortality. We felt that we were going either to heaven or to hell, but now we have had it revealed to us that we are not immortal, and that neither heaven nor hell is our destination in life. Instead God is forcing us to choose between death and immortality by choosing to live eternal life by faith, willing our attention on things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. This requires the force of will, bolstered by faith in God and love for God and His purpose in order to make the right choices.

I said a lot there, but I will go over it again at the beginning of the next sermon. What we see in this section of the Sermon on the Mount are very important elements of achieving this. First, it is illustrated by a negative command: "Lay not up for yourselves..." and it includes the word "treasures." This most naturally, I think, brings forth the idea of wealth. But on the other hand some men of God were quite wealthy. Abraham was exceedingly wealthy. There was Joseph and David, and Joseph of Arimathea, so we are not looking at wealth *per se* as being the problem, but the accumulation of wealth, which the Bible teaches very clearly is fraught with all kinds of spiritual danger.

The fact that some are able to rightly have wealth and not be turned aside from the Kingdom of God is proof that it is not wealth of and by itself that is the problem, but rather things pertaining to its accumulation, use, and attitude toward it. There is where the problem lies. What that means to me is that it leads me to believe that treasures, as Jesus used it here, represent anything we hold valuable enough to set our hearts and our mind on, and therefore our will to get. This broadens things way out.

I think that that is probably as good a place as any to stop. I would like to keep going, but the next time I speak we will pick it up with that thought. The "treasures" represent anything that we hold valuable enough to set out hearts and our minds on, and therefore our will to get. You do not have to be rich to have a treasure. All you have to have really is a misplaced desire, and almost anything material can become a treasure.

Think about it. You can be a widow; you can be somebody just married; you can be thirteen years old. You can be male or female. I do not care what your language is, what your nationality is, every single person on earth is capable of having something that they set their heart on that has nothing directly to do with the Kingdom of God or God's purpose. And so everybody falls under the instruction that Jesus is giving here. It is exceedingly important that we understand this principle that He is talking about if we are going to be able to use the love of God in loving Him, rather than fall back on the love of this world and make the wrong decision.

We are walking on a razor. We have got spirit, as it were, pulling us in each direction,

The Christian and the World (Part 4) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
and God is forcing choices of you and me day by day. He wants to see whom we really love.