The Christian And The World (Part 5)

The Course of the World

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I am going to be continuing on the series that I have been going through for the past four sermons. The first section of my last sermon in this series focused on this verse in Ephesians 2:2. I want you to turn there just so we can establish a starting point, and we will branch out from here and go into this subject a little more deeply.

The general tenue of the subject has been in regard to the world as it pertains to a Christian, and what we have to do in dealing with it. The previous sermon had moved to the place where I was beginning to give Biblical concepts regarding resisting the worldō things that we can do. The first thing that we can do is understand how God defines the world just as clearly as we possibly can. This verse has a great deal to do with understanding the way God looks at the world and the way we need to begin to look at it as well.

**Ephesians 2:2** Wherein in time past you [meaning Christians] walked 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.

What we found in that last sermon was that the word ēcourseē comes from the Greek aion, when it is transliterated into English, and it means path or way. The meaning does not stop there. It means particularly the characteristics of any given period of time. ēThe characteristics of any given period of time.ē So you will find in almost all of the modern translationsē that word aion is most frequently translated ēageē.

Secular men, completely apart from the Bible, recognized this phenomenon, that is, the ēcourseē and what this course means. So what they do, in writing histories usually or reflecting upon them in newspaper articles and magazinesé they will assign a name or a title to a particular age because there was something about that age that particularly set it apart from other periods of time. And so we have the Renaissance. We have the Elizabethan Age, or the Victorian Age, the Industrial Age, the Technological Age.

I tied this to a German word that you may not be too familiar with, but the Germans have really caught the essence of this word. They say it is zeitgeist. ēZeitēmeaning time, and ēgeistēmeaning ghost or spirit. The ēspirit of the timesē is what zeitgeist means. So what
The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh (http://www.cgg.org)

Paul literally said here is that we walked according to the spirit of the times, or the spirit of a system.

Historians recognized the ebb and the flow of particular characteristics that shaped people in any given period of time. Thus some periods of time are more or less moral than others. Some are imbued with a certain kind of energy for exploration, of new frontiers in science and industry, or even in the mass migrations of people. Sometimes there will be periods of tranquility and reflection, as though mankind is resting and gaining strength for the next period of high-stress turmoil.

Most of us who are in our 50s to 70s or 80s can reflect back on a more peaceful time, a more moral time in the United States' history. But now, beginning with the mid-60s, with the flower children and all that that implies, the spirit of the age was undergoing a change, and we have not broken from that since. It has carried its energy right on through the 70s, the 80s, and into the 90s, and now we are "blessed" with a President who grew up and was shaped and formed by the spirit of the times that he lived through.

George Bush will in all likelihood be the last President that we will ever have who lived through a more moral and tranquil period of time in American history. I do not mean to give the impression that that time was all good. It was not all good, but by comparison to what we are living through now, it was certainly over-all a better period of time to live in. All of us have been shaped to some degree by that environment in which we lived, and that is what Paul was referring to here. The spirit of the times—the zeitgeist, the "course of this world"—is what has helped tremendously to shape us into what we are. There are other factors, like the home environment that we grew up in. That has a very powerful effect upon us, but we also have to remember that our parents, too, were shaped by the times that they lived in as well.

What we must understand is that from God's point of view, all of this is evil, because the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, is the source of all this immaterial power that has had such a powerful and telling effect on the way we think, on the way we view things, our world view, our perspective on virtually every point of life. He has deceived the cosmos into accepting this. The cosmos, of course being mankind within this system, has been deceived by him. He has deceived them and us into living an anti-God way of life in the same general manner as he did Adam and Eve. The only real difference is the size and scope of the operation. With Adam and Eve it was confined to the garden and two people, but Revelation 12:9 says Satan has deceived the whole world, and his operations have shifted to worldwide significance.
The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh (http://www.cgg.org)

We are capable of doing good. Jesus said that. He said "You who are evil can do good things." A very plain statement by our Savior. But, brethren, the mixture is bad from God's point of view, even though we can do good. The mixture is so bad that without the spirit of God, without conversion, without transformation, we are unacceptable for living in the Kingdom of God.

That is pretty blunt, but it is true. Our heart is incurably sick, according to Jeremiah 17:9. It has to undergo a complete replacement. It cannot be repaired, even by God. It has to be replaced by the divine nature. So it is the "spirit of this world," "the course of this world," in us which must be overcome. It is the course, the nuances, the particular characteristics of this age that we wrestle against in order to cooperate with God, and if we do not wrestle successfully, then we do not take on the image of God.

God is absolutely pure in all of His motivations, as well as in conduct. That has a starting point, and that is going to be the subject for a little while here. You might want to turn to Isaiah 55. We are just going to touch base with a couple of verses here.

**Isaiah 55:8** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

Just think on that just a little bit. If His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways, are we going to be acceptable to be in His family and live in the Kingdom of God? In verse 9 He establishes an illustration so that we can understand how much greater His thinking is than ours.

**Isaiah 55:9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

"Thought" is the precursor of conduct. The two are inextricably linked, and so the Christian desiring to be like God, and in fact called and converted for this very purpose, daily struggles with the choices between the law of his mind and the law of his members, as Paul called them, because the course of this world is ever present and ever ready to spring forth in anti-God and demonic-motivated conduct, even as Peter did with Christ.

Did you hear what I said? Do you think that we Christians are incapable of coming up with demonic thought? We are not. Do you think that the influence of Satan has been completely broken through faith in Jesus Christ and in the acceptance of His blood? You
should know from the experience of your own lives that it has not yet been broken, that it still remains within us.

In that last sermon I gave you an illustration right out of God's word from Matthew 16, where Peter burst forth, "Be it not so, Lord," right after Christ said that He was going to go to Jerusalem, and He was going there and would be persecuted and put to death. Peter was not possessed, but still to varying degrees and at various times, Satan was influencing his thoughts, because they were not always correct. So Peter got caught in the middle of a rebuke from Jesus that was directly intended for Satan, but Peter was the one who uttered the words. He was the one that yielded to this demonic thinking that was completely out of line with the will and purpose of God, and it just came spewing out of him like first-nature.

It is very interesting to think about this that Peter got caught here because it happened even though the disciples were living with Christ day and night. We are going to carry this a little bit further. Judas, one of the twelve, became possessed even while living with Christ day and night for three and one-half years. Sobering to think about the impact that the course of this world the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience is not completely gone from us.


Luke 11:21 When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.

The word "armed" there would more clearly be translated, "When a strong man fully armed keeps [guards] his palace, his goods are in peace [safe and secure]."

Luke 11:22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils.

It is interesting the connection that Jesus gives to this statement.

Luke 11:23-26 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and
In the Bible, the Apostle Peter is warned, "The man that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Rev. 2:7)

The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh (http://www.cgg.org)

garnished. Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Back to Peter just a bit, and the fact that he undoubtedly was influenced by Satan and became the willing tool through which this rebuke of Jesus and God's purpose came, and it came through the mouth of Peter. If Satan will do that to one that close to Christ, do you think it is not possible for him to use you and me? He certainly can. The spirit of this world is still working. For this influence to be counteracted, to be moderated, to be overcome, . . . what Jesus is saying here is that the Christian who has been swept clean must do some things.

The illustration, here in Luke 11, directly involves demonic possession, but the principle contained in Jesus' teaching still applies, because though we are not possessed, we have all been strongly influenced by them to the point that the Bible described you and me as having been enslaved by Satan. Is that not true? That is a pretty close relationship to be his slave.

Back to Jesus' instruction here. The "strong man" represents Satan. The "stronger man" is Christ. So Jesus is warning that Satan is no weakling, passively giving up and accepting defeat. Even if he is cast out, he will continue to fight to retain his influence and control. And so the warning to you and me is that the Christian, like Peter who was caught between Satan and Christ...the Christian caught between the two of them simply cannot accept a sort of comfortable neutrality.

Becoming converted does not happen by magic. It requires trust in and love for God, combined with a conscious setting of the will, in cooperation with our Creator, our Father, and our elder Brother and High Priest. There must be prayer. There must be Bible study. There must be occasional fasting, and there must be obedience. All of these things are necessary to keep the lines of communication open so that we will come to know ourselves.

There must be application of His commandments in obedience in our daily circumstances, and thus we will come to know Him and His way of life as well. In order for this to be successful, it must be consistent. We cannot play a neutral game. We cannot have one foot in the church and one foot in the world. God is not playing games.

How many times have you heard the apostle say, "Be sober," "Judgment is on us now," "Be serious about our calling," "He that is not with me is against me"? We cannot be
neutral. There has to be a setting of our will in our lives by faith, and enacted in love toward God to show God that we are not neutral one bit. And even though we may be encompassed by weakness, and there may be times that we give in to this weakness, we are nonetheless going on.

It is just like going to school every day. It has to be consistently done, and we must express our faith and love in patient plodding along, in persevering in His way. "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." You can know just from what Jesus said Satan is not going to passively accept being cast out of our lives. He will come back at us time and time again. It is right here that Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount becomes valuable because He gets right to the heart of a very important and basic principle of success in how to resist the world.

If we consider what He says in Matthew 6 and apply it to the gospel, we will have taken a huge step away from this world and its influence and toward cooperation with God and His purpose. There are a number of elements to the advice the counsel, the instruction, the admonition which we might even say are commands that Christ gives contained between Matthew 6:19 and verse 34. Now I do not think I am going to read all of that, as I do not think that I will be able to finish going through this in this sermon, but we are going to concentrate for a while anyway on Matthew 6:19-24. Here comes Christ's advice:

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. 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 God and mammon.

That last verse directly applies to what Jesus said in Luke 11. There is no neutrality in this war into which we have become involved. Before we were called there were undoubtedly dissatisfactions with ourselves and also with the world, but it was something that we simply 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 of why we were born, and we basically had only material goals.
The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh (http://www.cgg.org)

It is entirely possible that 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 had vague feelings of immortality and believed that we were either going to heaven or to hell. But now it has been 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 δ that is God's life δ and to do this by faith, willing our attention on things above where Christ sits on the right hand of God. In order to do this δ I mean to make practical application of the things that we are learning δ requires faith, and it requires the force of will. It requires love to do it right. The purpose of this is to make right choices.

A point of clarification: The King James is not translated too well in this first phrase. It says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." It should read, "Lay not up for yourselves earthly treasures." The reason for this is that the contrast that Jesus is teaching is between "earthly" and "heavenly," not as to location as to where they are going to be stored, but location as to where the seeking is to be done. All of the seeking, whether earthly or heavenly, is going to be done on earth. It is going to be done now, in this life. So, what we see in this section of the Sermon on the Mount are important elements for achieving the production of heavenly treasures. The instruction begins with a negative command that includes the word treasures. The negative command is, "Don't lay up for yourselves earthly treasures." That's negative. "Don't do this."

"Treasures" most likely, and I would say most naturally, brings forth the idea of wealth, but many men of God were quite wealthy. In fact it says of Abraham that he was "exceedingly rich." The Bible does not exaggerate. Abraham must have been rich, and this rich man is the very father of the faithful. I am leading you to something here. It is entirely possible that the human being who gave up the most in material wealth in order to become a follower of God might well have been Moses. The indication is that he was next in line, as it were, to become Pharaoh, king, the sole leader, the dictator, the despot, whatever you want to call him, of the greatest nation, the richest nation on the face of the earth at that time. Even the Bible said that he thought the riches of Egypt as being something to be despised. Moses was wealthy.

Maybe I said this of David in the past, but I will tell you again. Back in the 50s I was subscribing to a magazine called True Magazine, and every month they would have a section there on interesting little facts that they had gathered from people. So what somebody did, using the figures that were given in the Bible regarding David's donation for the building of the temple there in Jerusalem (he got all the parts together so that Solomon could actually construct it), these mathematicians, economists, determined that David's personal wealth, which did not come out of the treasury of Israel, but it was
The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh

his personal wealth, must have amounted to somewhere around $20 billion at that time in today's money (1958-1959).

That is pretty rich. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man. Just considering these things, you ought to be able to get the idea that God is not against wealth. God is not against the accumulation of money per se. That is not the problem. God Himself is the wealthiest being in all of the universe. He owns everything. It is His by virtue of being the Creator and God of everything, and He wants us to be like He isō in His image. He is not against wealth. We learn from other things in the Bibleé that the accumulation of wealth is fraught with all kinds of spiritual dangers because carnality cannot handle it, and many, many people have been turned aside from the Kingdom of God by these very things. So what God's concern is regarding wealth are the things pertaining to its accumulation, its use, and our attitude toward it.

I have gone through this because I think it gives us some sort of a handle as to what this word "treasures" means. "Treasures" represents anything that we hold valuable enough to set our hearts on. "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart." Many of us have no desire for billions of dollars, but there are other things that we set our hearts on, are there not? We need to begin to think, thené is what we are setting our heart on, is it earthly, or is it heavenly? You see, you could be a person who hardly has a couple of dollar bills to rub together, and you can have "treasure," according to this interpretation here, because it is pulling you away from God's purpose in life. You could have treasure that means as much to you as, let us say, billions of dollars might mean to somebody else.

Turn with me back to Proverbs 4:23, because we are going to move off the word ñtreasuresò just a bit and onto the word "heart" before we put these two back together again. A very simple principle:

**Proverbs 4:23** Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

A very interesting statement. The Hebrew language did not have separate words for "heart" and "mind," and so the Bible uses the word "heart" to represent the mind. The heart is the seat of intellect, of emotions, of will, of moral consciousness, and therefore as such it is the fountainhead or the source of all the qualities that we consider part of life. The heart, the mind, is the starting point of all of the activities of life. Let me stop here just a second and remind you of Isaiah 55:8-9. "Your thoughts are not My thoughts, " God says, "and My ways are not your ways."
The heart is the starting point of all the activities of life. The heart is the place of control of what we do, and so the proverb warns us to guard it because it is the key to the whole man, because whatever captures the mind captures the man. The mind, as we know and understand, consists of the material brain and the spirit in man. We must be very careful because that spirit can be influenced either by the spirit of God, the spirit of Satan and demons directly, or the spirit of the world—the course of this world that we read of there of which Satan is the fountainhead, the source.

Therefore, since the heart can be influenced by any of these, we must be on guard that we are not allowing ourselves to be influenced by the wrong spirit and thus pulled toward the world and its treasures. I think you are going to have to admit that if you are following along with me, we have got a first-class battle on our hands. If a person's real treasure, his ultimate aim in all of his striving, is something pertaining to this earth—the money, fame, popularity, prestige, power—then his heart, the very center of his life, the source of his activity and conduct, will be absorbed in that mundane goal.

Remember Luke 11:19-26, where Jesus said that there can be no neutrality in this. It has got to be one or the other. What Jesus is driving at in Matthew 6 when He says, "Where your treasure is your heart will be," again He is stating an "either/or" proposition. The heart cannot give equal weight to both. It is impossible. There can be no neutrality, and we have got to come to grips with this if we are going to be successful in this life.

Your treasure is probably not your neighbor's, and it is yours whether you actually possess it or not, because your heart is set on it. Your treasure is not restricted to money or material goods. It is what we set our mind on. It is what we think is best for us. It is what we constantly seek and strive to attain that which we most hate to lose. If we have it, we feel blessed, and if we do not, we feel discontented, hurt, frustrated, uneasy, empty.

So now let me ask you this question: How important is the heart when we cannot afford, by Christ's own teaching, to be neutral between Him and the world? God has maneuvered each and every one of us into much the same position that poor Peter was when he caught that rebuke from Jesus Christ. He has put us into a position where we must choose. If we are going to choose right, we had better pay attention to our heart. The proverb says, "Guard it," because out of it are the issues of life.

We are going to take a look at some other scriptures that have to do with the heart. I want to begin in Hebrews 4:12.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and
sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul [life] and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

God has given us His word to evaluate ourselves with, to discern how, in what manner, when we need to put the guard up on our heart. The word "thought" appears in there. It appeared in Isaiah 55:8-9. It is defined as the process of using the mind actively and deliberately. "Intent" of the thoughts and intent is the mind's aim or purpose in thought. A Protestant commentator by the name of Wuest says in his commentary in regard to thoughts and intents he has translated it in a way that you might be able to relate to a little bit better: "The mind's reflections and conceptions." "Its reflections, meditations and conceptions."

Another way of putting it would be, "the heart's meditations and ideas." The sense is this: This is where conduct and attitude begin, and it is right here that we either permit it to develop it or to stop it by analysis and evaluation, using the word of God as the standard. And so, if our conduct is going to be the right choice, this is where you stop it in the heart.

**Proverbs 23:7** For as he thinks in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, says he to you; but his heart is not with you.

This verse carries this process one step further. The primary idea in this series of verses is actually an admonition to be prudent in the judgment of people, because what appears on the outside, in the form of conduct, is not always a true representation of what is going on in the mind. Some people are hypocrites. Some people are always playing the game of one-upmanship. They are always competing.

I give you a current example of this in our President's definition of the things that he is doing. To him, something that is legal is not necessarily immoral. A very interesting way of thinking, and so God's warning is, "Be careful." Some people are hypocrites who are purposely hiding their true person in order to make some short-term, self-centered gain. We have to understand from other portions of God's word that what is really in the heart eventually will come out, because it cannot be hidden, unless the heart is changed.

I read to you this verse in Numbers 32:23. "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and [you can] be sure your sin will find you out." And so eventually the heart will be exposed.
I do not want to make Proverbs 23:7 to be all bad, because it can have a good side to it as well. It can work the other way, because one may jump to an evil, false conclusion of another, even though the original person who is being judged had no evil intent at all, and so the overall thrust of that verse is to be careful in judgment.

Back to the New Testament again in the book of Matthew the 15th chapter, and you will recognize this immediately in verse 19. Again Jesus speaks.

Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

"Out of the heart:" That is where it all starts.

Matthew 12:33-37 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words [For by your words which come out of the heart] God says "Guard it." Above all things, "Guard it!" you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

And so once gain the heart is shown as the "source."

I mentioned "tree." At the beginning of the illustration here, "tree" represents the heart, and "what comes out of the mouth" represents the heart's fruit. Before what can be said, or let us say can be qualified, as "good," Jesus is saying the heart must be cleansed. "Make the tree good." Take the corruption out of the heart. It has to be made good. And so the heart is revealed for what it is by what comes from the mouth. The heart is revealed for what it is by the conduct (Matthew 15:19).

Jesus is showing the necessity of the change of nature of our nature, but He carries this one step further by telling them that they had judged Him as a blasphemer. The reality was that the accusers were going to be judged in the light of their unfounded
accusations because their heart was corrupt and their judgment was bad. Very interesting.

Verse 35 makes a direct connection to the word "treasure" again, indicating an abundance. "A good man, out of the good treasure [the abundance] of his heart..." and so the heart is the reservoir from which conduct is drawn. In Matthew 5 and verse 8, at the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus said:

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

This does not mean that this kind of a person will be sinless, but it does mean that they will be a person without guile and deceit; a person who is chaste in his thinking, and this, too, occurs as a process of growth through overcoming.

Psalm 51:6-7 Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part shall you make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

That is what we need. That is the solution to this problem, and so Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Guard it, because the heart conditions all of our activities; and our heart, in like manner, is conditioned by our conduct. This is really interesting. The heart is the source of what we do, but when we do what we do, it reinforces what is in the heart. It is almost like a "Catch 22," except for one thing: If we have the right kind of treasure, and we do the right thing—Oh! What a blessing! It will reinforce the right thing.

So conduct, in the form of activity and attitude, has its source in and is constantly fed by what we allow ourselves to think about. Activity and attitude serve to etch the thinking patterns ever more deeply. Who can think of what kind of advice appears in the Bible about this? I will give you one real clear one. Paul said, "Think about whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy," Good things in are vastly increase the opportunity for good things to come out. Think about it.

So whenever Jesus speaks of the heart in Matthew 6, He is speaking of the central
The Christian and the World (Part 5) by John W. Ritenbaugh (http://www.cgg.org)

reservoir of all that we are, of what we think, of what we will, of what we feel, of what we hope, of what we have affection for. It is what we call "myself," and it is intertwined and implicated with us in such a way that what befalls it befalls us, and what it seeks we seek, and what its treasure is, is our treasure. And so in Hebrew thinking and Jesus was a Hebrew the heart is the man. So, this verse is saying that our deeds, our conduct, are not an accidental set of outward actions. This needs to be driven home, because the actions of most of mankind are done so mechanically and reflected upon so little that the conviction of having any responsibility for what we do is almost extinct. "The Devil made me do it."

Today, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists are blaming virtually everything on the genes. Twice in the past month I have heard two people with a Church of God connection (not Church of the Great God) who said, "Well, this is just the way that God made me." Oh! God did not make them that way. They may be victims of the spirit of this world, of the course of this world to some degree, but these are people who should be converted, and they should understand that they are responsible for their actions because their actions are coming out of their heart, and God holds them responsible.

They are supposed to be thinking about what they are doing; and God, by the revelation of Himself and the revelation of His purpose, has put us into the position where we must choose! And then He commands us to choose life.

What Jesus is doing is telling us that what we treasure is going to be dominant in the direction that our life is going to move. What do you value? God expects us to use our minds. Conversion is not magic. God is producing sons in His image. Do you think that God does not think? He wants children who think like He does. Look at what He created! This awesome creation came out of His thinking! What He is creating in you and me are moral beings who are moral like He is moral, who are pure like He is pure. But just as surely as this creation came out of His thinking, morality is going to come out of our thinking, and if He is working in us, it will be morality like He is moral and pure and good.

The catch in all of this, brethren, is that this mind of ours, educated in this environment in this world, is by nature so strongly appealed to and attracted by things that are sensual and material, and though they are not inherently evil, and in fact very much of it can be considered to be good, and even to a limited degree necessary, like food, shelter, and those kind of things, all of them, brethren, are ultimately perishable. This is why John said, "Do not love the world, because it is passing away." Our "treasure" has to be the things of the holy and pure godly spirit world. Set your affections on things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.
God has put you and me right in the middle between Him and the world and He is saying, "Choose." Again, I will repeat it: Jesus is instructing us, that in the practical everyday milieu of life, what we treasure is going to have a tremendous impact on our choices. So everybody's treasure is not the same. We have to expand our thinking out, away from. Every one of us is capable of doing this, but understand that the spirit in man is drawn to this world like a bird to its nest, or like a compass needle to the north, or a horse let loose to its barn. And so we have to very seriously question ourselves as to where our heart gravitates when we are left to ourselves. A person's god is that which he most earnestly works for, longs for, and the thought of losing causes him to tremble.

So here, brethren, in Matthew 6:19 is a foundational teaching, which if followed will strongly protect us from being deceived into covetously choosing this world's sensual and temporal enticements when a better choice lies at the right hand of God, because God has opened our minds. So check your treasure. Where is it?

Jesus did not stop there. He went on to give a very positive command, because He says in Matthew the 6th chapter and verse 20:

**Matthew 6:20** But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Jesus adds logical weight to what He has just said by His use of the moth, the rust, and thieves. He did this in order to remind us that all earthly treasures things that we might set our mind on are ultimately going to diminish in value, and finally they will cease to serve their purpose altogether. And so, concerning material things, things of this earth, nothing is a given, nothing is an absolute constant. So bread becomes moldy. Garments wear out. Fields become weed-infested. Fences break down. Foundations and roofs twist and shift and begin to leak. Then even gold and silver tarnish and perish.

Besides these things, there is the damage indeed, sometimes havoc that is wreaked by termites, tomatoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, diseases, soil erosion. Then there is inflation which eats away at wealth. Taxation, which may even amount to confiscation. Bank failures and stock market slumps and crashes that one might even wonder whether it is brought about by manipulation, by the powerful and wealthy for even greater wealth. In addition to that, we have prolonged illness and accidents, and then we die, and all the treasures that a person might have pinned his hopes on vanish with him.
Did you read that little illustration that I gave in the article on covetousness, the Russian story about land given away there in Russia? Every person could have as much land as he could walk and cover in one day, in a 24-hour period. There was this man who decided he was going to run, and so he ran and he ran and he ran; and when he got to the place where he should turn around and start heading back, he spied another piece of land that looked awfully good to him, and so he decided that he was going to run out there and circle around it before he made his turn back to the finish line. And so he got out there, and sure enough he made his turn back. He was maybe about three-quarters of the way around everything that he wanted to have, and he decided that he was not going to make it back to the starting point, so he stepped up his pace even faster than before, because he was coming down to the homestretch. He gets right up to the place, you know, as the sun goes down in the west, and he collapsed and died. And so they gave him just as much land as he needed—six feet of it. There is a very interesting truth in that little story.

Jesus says in this part here, "Take a look. What is it that you are striving for? Is it something that is going to pass away, or is it something that is eternal?" So the advice is very clear. Make your choice. Choose the eternal thing, because if you choose the other, you are going to end up with six feet of earth, and that is it. "Love not the world, neither the things in the world, because the world passes away, and the lust thereof."