

The Christian And The World (Part 7)

Our View of the World

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As we go through this series on resisting the world, I hope you will be paying particular attention to it, because it indirectly shows what went wrong in the Church in these past ten or so years. There is a direct connection between Laodiceanism, worldliness, and the decline of faith in this section of the Sermon on the Mount that I have been spending a great deal of time on. If you are following closely, you are going to see the connection. Maybe you have already seen it. I do not know, but it will begin to become very clear...maybe in this sermon, or if not, in the next sermon that I give in this series.

In the last sermon, we saw more evidence that what we aim our life at—what Jesus called “our treasure”—will to a great extent determine whether we will be in the position to resist the world, because where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. This is important because the heart focuses in the direction that life is going to go in. You might recall the scripture there in Proverbs 4, beginning in verse 20. I am going to read this to you as we lay the foundation here. God says:

Proverbs 4:20-22 My son, attend to **my** words. [I am going to put some emphasis on particular parts here.]; incline your ear unto **MY** sayings. Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them [store them, place them] in the midst of your heart. For they are life unto those that find them...

“Life,” here, probably indicating “abundant life.” We already are living, so in the context, at the very least, it means these words are going to add a quality to your life that is not able to be lived any other way unless we follow His words. It could also imply, at least indirectly, eternal life—which is the way God lives.

Proverbs 4:22-23 ...and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart [Keep means guard, protect, preserve.] with all diligence.

Notice the word diligence. Your heart has to be guarded. If it is left open to any old thing that comes down the road, it is not too good.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep [guard] your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also. The heart has to be diligently guarded, and it should be the repository for the word of God. Things that are not part of the word of God are also going to be there, and that is okay. There is nothing wrong with that as long as we are following the direction of God's word.

That was the first step of Jesus' program. We saw (in the second step of Jesus' plan for resisting the world and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ) His comment about the eye. The eye is that part of the body through which the rest of the body is able to make use of light. Light, remember, is a symbol of truth. It is through the eye that the physical body is able to make use of light. He said if the eye is single—in good condition, unified, all the parts working right—the rest of the body is able to make use of light effectively and efficiently. But if any part of the eye is damaged or diseased, the person cannot function as well, and he may even be put in danger of injury, or worse, death.

The purpose of this instruction is to show that even as the body has the eye to make use of light, so does the mind, the heart. Now the heart's "eye" is understanding. A true understanding makes spiritual vision clear. We can accurately call understanding the mind's eye. We might also say that it is the way we look at things. We might also say that it is our world view, or perspective, but I think *understanding* captures it best. It is this understanding which guides, directs, and lightens the way spiritually, morally, and ethically so the person can keep his life pointed toward whatever it is he treasures.

It is in our understanding that we set our aims, our intentions, and determine how we are going to act or react to the circumstances of life. "Understanding" determines what we aim at and our position in matters of life. By our "mind's eye," we set the mark that we aim at, the place that we go. It is what we keep in view and our motions are directed accordingly. In Jesus' teaching, then, if our understanding is clear—the "mind's eye," if it is single—if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly toward them; if we aim purely and only at the glory of God and direct all entirely to Him, then our eye is single. We are focused on the right thing in life.

I gave you an illustration from the Apostle Paul. He said, "For me to live, is Christ." He meant that his entire existence was bound up in, totally devoted to, serving Christ. If we, too, are this way, then our actions will be pleasing to God. We will feel much more confident and comfortable with ourselves in this relationship with Him. If we are to accomplish this, our lives must have a quality of focus to them that might be favorably compared to the kind of diligence and discipline that you saw pictured in those people

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who went to the championships of the world in the Olympics. If you saw any of the vignettes they put on about those people's lives—the dedication they had to achieving the skill level they did so they were world-class in whatever their discipline happened to be—you begin to understand the kind of dedication that God is pointing us toward in order that we grow to the greatest extent and be in His kingdom.

I think that you will recall, if you saw any of that, those people had a dedication, a devotion to their area that does not permit much else to intrude into their lives. Did you see those about the little teenage girls who were out there skating? They were up at three o'clock in the morning, at 4 A.M. off in the dark of the night to get to the rink and practice for two or three hours before they even had breakfast, then back home, and rush off to school or whatever, and seemingly have a normal life. They come home from school, did their homework, and are right off to bed (when everyone else is out playing with the other kids in the neighborhood) so that they can get back up again at 3 A.M. and start the routine, day in, day out.

I do not know how many of us even come close to that, and maybe that is unbalanced. I am not recommending that we follow that kind of a regimen, but I am pointing this out to show that a dedication is required, a devotion, so that we can grow as much as possible, and I will tell you, you will not have much room for the world in doing something like that.

We are going to go on to the next point because it is essential as well: the impossibility of combining a pursuit of the Kingdom of God while still being worldly. This is going to be shown unambiguously in the next verse. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:24 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.

There is a progression, here. All of these points connect one to the other. He begins with a treasure. So a person with an inappropriate treasure, combined with a fuzzy focus on the use of knowledge where the understanding is defective, will suffer from a misdirected will. (1) Wrong treasure, (2) Fuzzy focus, (3) Misdirected will. One, two, three. We want to avoid that. You sharpen up and get the right treasure. You sharpen your understanding and then the opportunity to meet the criteria given in verse 24 is exceedingly increased. A person who does not meet that imagines that he can give his full allegiance to two goals at the same time—God on the one hand, and the world on the other. But Jesus said that such a concept is impossible. It cannot be accomplished.

We are going to turn to a scripture back in James the 4th chapter, and verse 4.

James 4:4 You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

That is pretty clear. The person who thinks that he can serve both equally is self-deceived, and such a person puts himself in danger of losing both if he does not make the correct choice. He certainly puts himself in danger of losing the Kingdom of God, if indeed he even has been called. It brings that into question, if a person wants to try to do both. Our minds must be fixed on Christ like Paul's was, and the things of this world ought to be sought only within the parameters of what God permits.

I am going to bring something up in Romans 6 that is really taught in Matthew 6. To serve God is the same thing as laying up treasures in heaven. To serve mammon is the same thing as laying up treasures on earth. The force of what Jesus said is more apparent in the Greek than it is in the English on the basis of two words that He used. One is the word "serve," and the other is the word "other." Here in Romans 6:6 is the same word that appears in Matthew 6:24.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

No man can serve two masters. Both of these passages have the same word in them. This word does not signify an occasional act of obedience, but rather to be a bond servant. Some have gone so far as to translate it "slave." A slave is a person who is indebted to or captured by someone else—the one they are serving—and a slave has no control over his life. That is what makes a slave a slave—when somebody else is pulling the strings in his life.

In the case of God, He does not do this. He still leaves free moral agency open to everyone of us. But on the other hand, He wants it to be in our mind that we are to enslave ourselves, to make the choice to enslave ourselves willingly to Him. That is going to produce the most and the greatest. He wants us to have the attitude that we are His slaves, and to use our free moral agency to put ourselves in that position. So the word "serve" does not mean an occasional act of service, but to be a bond servant, a slave, the property of a master, constantly and entirely subject to his will.

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Romans 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held [in slavery to sin and death and to Satan]; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Same word again. God wants us to choose to serve Him the way we formerly served sin, and we did that willingly when we did not know any better. Now we have to fight against it, against that pull, in order to make the choice to do the right thing.

The second word is this word “other.” The Greek language has two words that can be translated into the English word “other.” The one word signifies another of the same kind or order. For example, if you were in the military and you would say “another captain”—it is a captain, a man of the same rank. Then you would use the one word “other,” or if you intended another lieutenant, it would be a person of the same rank or kind.

The second word that is used here is the one that Jesus used, and it signifies another of a different genus, kind, sort. When Jesus said, “No man can serve [enslave himself] to two masters, for either he will hate the one, or love the other,” He signaled masters who are diametrically opposed to each other. Something entirely different and not the same. Entirely different.

Think about this. A person can serve two masters in succession, right after the other, even though they might be quite different. You might have one boss who is a nice guy. Then he is replaced by someone else, and you serve this second boss, and he is entirely different. Boy! I tell you! He is all spit and polish and real demanding, and he really rides your case. They are entirely different personalities.

Both of them can be served, but it has to be done in succession. Now a person may serve two masters unequally. You have this master here, and you have this master there. Matthew 6:24 will permit that. It says that you cannot serve two masters equally, but you can serve two masters unequally. What this means is that you are occasionally doing an act of service for one while you are usually and habitually submitting to, serving, the other.

A man, a person, may serve two masters at the same time if they are both on the same side and they are merely in a line of authority. For instance, a king and his ambassador. You are actually serving the king through your submission to the ambassador. So the one master is merely subordinate to the other, but we cannot serve two equally and habitually at the same time if they are opposed to each other, as God and the world,

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because each master's interests are entirely incompatible. We will get back to that thought in a little bit.

We are going to go on to something else in verse 24. He said that you will love one and hate the other, and hold to one and despise the other. Jesus uses these to describe how it will be evident that you cannot serve two at the same time. In other words, this situation will produce some fruit. If you know what to look for, you will be able to see that you are not serving equally. To the one, the slave will lean toward, stick to, respect, and in doing so he thus declares his love. To the other, there will not be the same enthusiasm. There might even be a severe dislike, a withdrawing, and a disregard for, and thus the hatred is showing.

Stay with me, because we are leading to something here. Jesus does a very interesting thing. Mammon literally means riches or wealth, and since it is contrasted with God, it therefore represents any earthly treasure. But, He also personified mammon. He used it as though it were a living thing. Jesus personified mammon as a master demanding subservience of a slave.

Consider this. God is certainly animate. He is living, and therefore mammon must be understood in this context as signifying the living god of the riches of this world, of earthly treasure—Satan. Did you get that? Mammon, really, when you come to understand it, is Satan the Devil. No wonder James said that he who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God! Satan is the enemy, and this is his world, and if our interests are in his world, we make ourselves enemies of God. Now why? In Romans 6:16 it says, "Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey?"

To search, to seek after, to make ourselves subservient to mammon is the same thing as making ourselves subservient to Satan the devil. What do we have? Idolatry. Can you see why these two masters are definitely diametrically opposed? The One commands that we walk by faith; the other by sight. The One, to be poor in spirit, to be humble; the other, to be proud and aggressive. The One, to set our affection on things above; the other, to set our affections on things on the earth. The One, to look for things that are unseen and eternal; the other, to things that are temporal. The One says to be careful for nothing; the other, to be full of anxiety. The One, to be content with such things as we have; the other, to enlarge your desires as far as you can. The One, to be ready to distribute; the other, to grasp and withhold. The One, to seek joy in the Creator; the other, to seek joy in the created. There is no way these two masters can be served equally. To serve God then is to love Him.

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Mammon is literally money, food, clothing, property (such as real estate, automobiles). Within its spirit—within the definition of mammon—are also implied abstract things like power, notoriety, and status. So Jesus is saying that the person who loves God will show it by placing everything—himself and everything that is his—at God's disposal. This requires a pretty firm setting of the will and a clear understanding; therefore, the eye, the vision, the light, the truth. And so this makes it clear that loving God is not merely a matter of emotions, but love in the sense of the first and the second great commandments of the law. Let us look at these two.

Mark 12:30-31 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment: And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

This kind of love involves the will. It involves having the right goal—treasure; understanding it, and then setting the will, disciplining the self, to serve Him as completely as we possibly can. Can you recall when you were baptized that the minister very likely went through Luke 14:26, where Jesus said that if any man comes after Him he has got to forsake—he has to hate—father, mother, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, any other relative, and to take up his cross and follow Him? This is a direct connection between the treasure, the eye, and the will—not seeking, not being able to have two masters, and the two great commandments.

Matthew 10:37-39 He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.

God can neither be bribed nor sweet-talked into accepting us. He wants results. He wants to see the fruits of conversion, and dedication is essential to this. Sometimes I know, brethren, that it is difficult for us to relate to a judgment that seems so demanding; but, brethren, He does this. He sets His own will to act this way because it is good for us on the basis of two very real reasons. One is that it helps to prepare us to be in His image. Suppose God says, “Well, it is okay if you do this, or that, or the other thing. I do not really care if you're dedicated.” Do you think, knowing human nature, that you would be very dedicated to achieving these things? I do not think so. I know the way I am. It is

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very easy for me to get off the beaten track unless I know that my God is telling me I had better stick to this thing and really turn my life around.

The second reason is that this approach to life will truly bring us an abundant life, the abundant life that everybody is looking for and trying to get out of things that cannot produce it. Do you know of *anything* that God tells us to do that is not good for us? Matthew 10:39 (“He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it”) contains both a positive and a negative statement regarding the same truths. Clinging to this life, going for earthly treasures, may cause us to forfeit the best from Christ, the abundant life in this world and also very likely the Kingdom of God as well.

The more that we love this life's rewards, the more that we are going to discover how empty they really are. The best way to enjoy life is to loosen our grasp on earthly rewards, to be free to follow Christ, and in so doing we will inherit eternal life and begin at once to experience the benefits of following Him. You lose the earthly life, you gain eternal life. You gain the earthly life, you lose eternal life. It is that simple. That is why He is so demanding. Because He wants the best for us, He wants us to choose to be His slave. It is good for us, and it is good for His purpose as well.

Human nature has deceived us into thinking that life consists of an abundance of things. Things are not evil, but they do not bring true abundance, because God has never created within them the power to supply that. The abundant life comes from something else. It comes from the relationship with Him and following through in His commandments. In addition to that, human nature has deceived us, and so it is natural for us to think that what we are is acceptable for the Kingdom of God. That is not right either. That is a form of self-righteousness. God will not take us as we are. You know, “Just As I Am, Without One Plea.” That is a damnable lie.

We have to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We are not fit for the Kingdom of God the way we are, and what we are seeing here in the Sermon on the Mount are the foundational elements and how to achieve that—how to get rid of the world, how to resist the world, have the right treasure, get your eye cleared up so that the vision is going in the right direction, so that you can be single minded, and then dedicate yourself to being enslaved by God.

That is how growth—the abundant life, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God—is going to be achieved. The kind of self-sacrificing, enthusiastic devotion that Jesus is speaking of absolutely cannot be rendered to two parties, but whosoever does do it becomes a worshipper, and what he gives himself to becomes his (the worshipper's) god. It follows

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that if it is not the true God, then we are facing idolatry.

Now Galatians 6 says something very interesting in regard to the use of our time and energies.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

Think of this in terms of yourself. What are you sowing? Every day we have another day to sow the right seeds by doing the right things. We're given the opportunity, the time to do that, and God is not mocked. We cannot pull the wool over His eyes. We know what He says He wants us to do.

Galatians 6:8-9 For he that sows to his flesh [earthly treasures] shall of the flesh reap corruption. [You gain this life, you lose the Kingdom of God.] But he that sows to the Spirit [You die to this world, but you live to God.] shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing...

Day after day, we are faced with this challenge of choosing life, and it is up to us. It is easy to get tired. It is easy to get distracted. It is easy to become anxious about the things of this life.

Galatians 6:9-10 ...for in due season we shall reap [that is God's promise] if we faint not. [If we don't quit. If we do not give up.] As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

What we are dealing with is a universal principle that cannot be successfully challenged. The principle is so simple. You sow corn; corn comes out of the ground. You sow carrots; carrots come out of the ground. You would be amazed if you threw one seed into the ground and something else came out. Well, God is telling us that morally, ethically, and spiritually, if we are sowing the right seed, the right things will be produced. We look at the fruits. God is not mocked. He cannot be fooled. If we are wise, we will not be fooled either. We do not want to let time just slide by us. We want to take advantage and redeem the time while we have it.

We can deceive ourselves that we can serve both masters equally, but sooner or later,

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where our true allegiance lies is going to show, and whichever master comes out on top, this is the one which has been in reality the one that has been served and worshipped all along. Maybe the person is deceived to such an extent that he does not even know it himself.

A wife cannot love two husbands equally. A husband cannot love two wives equally. A number of years ago there was a popular song titled "Torn Between Two Lovers." Now, that situation is possible, but it is impossible to love both equally. People can lust enough to desire two different lovers, but they cannot be loved equally. The hatred, as Jesus states it, will show in a gradual abandonment of loyalty to the one. It cannot produce good fruit. It is impossible. I will show you an example in John the 12th chapter of this principle in action. Here, when we look at it, we are looking at the tail end of it.

John 12:4-6 Then said one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

As Judas went along with Jesus these three and one-half years, do you think that Judas was self-deceived that nobody was aware of what was going on in his life? It says in the Book here that Jesus knew from the beginning who it was that would betray Him. So what was Judas doing? Apparently others knew that he was reaching into the bag and using the money for his own personal use as well as Jesus'. Somebody besides him knew it as well, but Judas was deceived enough that he thought that he could serve the Messiah and himself even through thievery, and that the laws of God would not work against it. "Whatever you sow, you reap."

Look at Matthew 26, because it culminated in a very tragic affair.

Matthew 26:14-16 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

A very simply stated process. Judas was serving his desire for mammon even while he fellowshiped with Jesus, and it eventually led to him selling Christ into the crucifixion. The character followed the act, or the act produced the character, however you want to look at it. Whatever he sowed, that is what he reaped.

Let us compare this to Paul. You might recall also the other apostles, that Peter said at one time to Jesus, “Lo, we have forsaken all and followed You. What shall we have in the regeneration?” I chose to use this series of verses here because it is more specific.

Philippians 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

Let us compare ourselves. What do you have of the flesh that might hinder you, or might be sacrificed in service to God? Paul said that regardless of what you had, he gave up more. He sacrificed more.

Philippians 3:5-9 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

A wholly different attitude from Judas'. You see, he never abandoned his loyalty to Christ. Apparently, when he was converted, he recognized that his life was going to take a radical change. That radical change had already begun, and he just gave up everything that he held dear to him in order to submit to becoming the slave of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

Let us understand a little bit about what Paul is driving at. Beginning in verse 4, he lists his religious credentials, his earthly achievements. There are seven of them in all, and these—and I am sure this is the reason he named them—had been his earthly treasures. This is what he held dear more than money.

It is interesting that the Greek gives a little bit of a twist in verse 7 that at least my King James does not say, because where he says, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,” means that he counted all of these things as detrimental to salvation. They were a hindrance. He felt that he had enough spiritual insight to realize that if he tried to hold onto those things, he was going to be a man divided between the

Pharisees and Christ. He could not serve both of them. He knew enough at that time to recognize that he was going to have to give up on the Pharisees and all of the pedigree that he had completely and totally, and just junk it, because they were going to hold him back if he tried to hang onto them. So Paul, somewhere along the line, learned that trusting in religious privileges and human attainments actually work to drive a person from God. Paul then renounced his earthly treasures in order to be recognized or acknowledged by God as being in Christ in order to be saved through faith in Christ. He gave it all up.

I know that every once in a while we have speculated as to who gave up the most in all of the Bible. In terms of worldly goods it was probably Moses. In terms of pedigree, it may have been the Apostle Paul. Moses gave up all the treasures of Egypt. The important thing is that he walked away from it in order to go into the desert or the wilderness as a poor man, equipped only, as it were, with his faith in God. Was it sufficient?

We are beginning to work around to the statement that I made at the beginning of this sermon. What Jesus is addressing here is what has caused the problem within the Church. Laodiceanism is nothing more than worldliness. It is a worldliness that arises because people lose their faith. Because we lose our faith in this invisible but powerful God, the world keeps becoming more and more attractive to us until we become wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and come to think that we have all the wealth of the world, but what we do have is “the world.” This is serious stuff.

We are beginning to work around to why I am giving this series, which is: If we are ever going to recapture the faith once delivered, we are going to have to reverse this process, come out of the world, return to the purity that we had in our devotion and dedication to the truths of God, and follow Him diligently in obedience as a slave. He and His way become our treasure.

“A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.” We were losing our understanding, and that is proof that we were sinning. So we have to go back to the basics—something that most of us should have passed through ten or fifteen years ago. We have to go back to the faith once delivered. We have to go back to the love that we lost. We must have the right treasure, the right understanding, the setting of the will to be God's slave.

Let us go to Mark 10:21. This is about the rich young ruler.

Mark 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One

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thing you lack: go your way, sell whatsoever you have, and give to the poor; and you shall have treasure in heaven.

Is that not interesting? It goes right back to the Sermon on the Mount. Most of us do not have this kind of treasure to give up, but on the other hand, all of us are rich in something of this world. I do not know what it is for you, but Christ is requiring of us the same kind of standards that He laid down for this man and which Paul was willing to give up. He held that pedigree pretty highly, but he gave it up. Moses gave up being Pharaoh. He gave it up. He gave up all the treasures of Egypt—all the acclaim, all of the status, all of the fine clothing, and everything that went with the powerful office of the Head of State. He walked out of there with a slave people to shepherd griping, moaning, murmuring people to a better land and a better way of life. He did not take on an easy responsibility.

Mark 10:21 [Jesus says] Come, take up the cross, and follow me.

Mark 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and said unto his disciples [because the fellow went away], How hardly shall they that have riches [mammon] enter into the kingdom of God!

I used mammon to connect it to Matthew 6:24. Mammon can be anything. It literally means wealth. It literally means riches. But we are all rich—every one of us—if in nothing else except human nature.

Mark 10:23-24 How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

The key word for our purposes right now is the word "trust"—confidence, faith. What did we just read that Paul said in Philippians 3:9? That he might be found with the righteousness that came through the faith of Christ. Trust. You see, putting trust in worldly riches erodes faith. Subtly, it eats away at it. The reality of where we put our trust is shown by what we are devoted to. We always give ourselves away. What do we spend our time and energies accomplishing? It shows our devotion.

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There are principles that we can turn to that will help to guide us, and one of these is in I Timothy 6:8-11. I will not expound this whole thing, but all of it will become important as we go along.

I Timothy 6:8-11 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. For the love of money [Connect this to what we just read there in the book of Mark.] is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

And then he goes to: "Fight the good fight of faith." "Pursue after faith." I am dropping these words in because they are going to be important in the next sermon. In order to live the way that God wants us to live, that is, according to the standards that are laid down there in the Sermon on the Mount, the only way that it can be successfully achieved is through faith. It is the key element in this.

Let us go to Proverbs 18:11-12. Think of this in terms of the two scriptures here. One talks about those who pursue after riches, and they are going to pierce themselves through with many sorrows. The other talks about the rich young ruler who trusted in his riches.

Proverbs 18:11-12 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility.

That just about brings us full circle. What do you trust? That shows us where our wealth is. We have seen that God is not against wealth *per se*, but the pursuit of wealth and the attainment of it is fraught with all kinds of spiritual dangers. We have seen that the pursuit of earthly treasures blurs one's vision, and that it works to destroy understanding.

We are seeing that it ultimately leads to subtly destroying one's faith in God, because a rich man's wealth is his high tower. Are you beginning to see why Jesus counseled, "Do not have earthly treasures"? If they become your wealth, those earthly treasures become the repository of your faith; and your faith, rather than being in God, is going to

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be in something earthly. It will not save us. We will lose out on the Kingdom of God because it ever-so-gradually leads a person to trust in his own achievement of earthly treasures, whatever it happens to be. It does not matter what it is, it becomes his defense, his place of refuge, and his place of safety, rather than God.

So what do we have? We have blurred spiritual vision, lessened spiritual understanding, misplaced trust, pride, and covetousness, which is idolatry—probably, at least according to Ritenbaugh here, the worst sin of all. And that, brethren, is what Laodiceanism is. It is idolatry.

“You say that you are rich and are increased with goods, and have need of nothing”—not even God. Do you understand why He is so upset with the Laodiceans? Right at the very end, when mankind (you might say you and me; those who have been called into the Church), have in all likelihood been given the broadest understanding of the word of God of all people in the history of God's Church—we end up telling Him we do not need Him.

To renounce one's achievements and former goals as Paul did clearly requires the setting of the will, because we are naturally going to be concerned about the physical necessities like a job, food, clothing. In order to help us understand that we will be helped along the way by God, Jesus then proceeds the following instruction beginning in Matthew 25, and we will get to that the next time.

Please be patient with me as we wade through this. I want us to understand this well so that we can get our lives turned around from the wrong direction, if indeed we are putting our faith in the wrong thing. So that is all for today.