

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Colossians 2:8

Just a few short decades back, we saw the pervasion of a teaching which used to be referred to as “Prosperity Theology,” or simply, “Prosperity.” This teaching was a direct violation of Colossians 3:2, which tells us to set our affections on things above, not on things on this earth. It, of course, became popular because who wants to accept the idea that life for a true believer in a sin-filled world is hard, if you can go to a church which teaches you how to live in fleshly comfort?

Now, some of you don’t even know what I’m talking about, because prosperity teaching is not as obvious as it used to be; and there is a main reason why this is true. Prosperity teaching has pervaded so deep into the Christian religion that it no longer stands against a background which it contrasts with. Today, prosperity, or some form of the doctrine, is standard in most churches. You may not see it because it has become so blended into what is now “normal” Christian theology that it practically is the theology everything else is based on. All those things that made it stand out have been put in the basement or thrown in the dumpster. One very prominent example is the song books we used to use. We used to sing songs about suffering through this life and about all its heartache coupled with how it would be worth it all when we saw Jesus face to face. We used to sing about that glorious day when all the burdens we have been carrying and all the persecution which comes from living this life according to God’s Word, was over. We looked forward to that day we would lay it all down at the foot of God’s throne. We sung about how one day we would exchange it all for a crown-of-life, and that was the true prosperity we sought!

However, most people in church today don’t think that way. In fact, many have been taught that kind of thinking



By Philip Busby

is archaic, and something which has held the church back for many a century. They teach, we have grown into a new light of understanding, which is that God wants all Christians to live in prosperity and success. They tell us that old suffering attitude of the church should be a thing of the past; because once you come to the Lord, you’re a child of the King who owns it all. However, the problem is not teaching that God is the King and we are His children. The problem is that they miss the point: all humans were created by God whether people want to admit it or not. God made this world and everything in it for the use of all men as they see fit, not just those who believe in Him. The problem is also not the teaching that God wants us to prosper or be successful. The problem is what they are interpreting as being prosperous and successful. The point they are missing is that the Word tells us when we come out from the world and choose to live for God, old things pass away and all things become new. (II Cor. 5:17) They want us to just keep seeking the old!

Amazingly enough, a few of the old songs do still get sung, but people do not often know what they mean. They have been so trained to believe and focus on this life that many people believe their trials are about those setbacks and struggles they face while learning how to, and climbing to, the top. Prosperity teaching used to say silly things like, just ask God for a new car and you shall receive it. This is why the teaching has often been referred to as: “Name it and claim it; Blab it and grab it.” The beginnings of this teaching were ridiculous, and far too many people tried it and it simply did not work. Now, many of the people teaching those very first doctrines will also mock the past of this teaching; because even though it failed to pan out, the basic idea got most people’s attention, and that gave false teachers time to grow it into something far more

philosophical sounding. The base idea that you can have it all here and heaven too, is a very appealing idea which many people will put great effort into attaining if there is even the slightest hope it could work. So, now we are told there are actually steps and keys to getting what you want instead of just ask and get. This new highbred version of the teaching has allowed many people to, almost unknowingly, plug this great sounding teaching into their belief system without even taking a second thought. Today, Christians understand there are struggles to face and hardships to bear, but they believe they're all about doing what is necessary to climb out of that economically oppressed, old-fashioned suffering for the things of God, kind of state Christians have been led to believe in the past.

This is also why the fiery preaching of the past is going away, and being replaced by preachers who sound more like motivational speakers! According to them, no longer is living for God about coming to a place of repentance from our sin and growing through the convicting power of the Holy Ghost in our lives and churches. No longer are people taught - nor do they want to hear - that taking up the cross and following Christ takes both hands, which means we must release this world and the things it has to offer. (John 12:25) No longer are we taught that the reward for serving God is knowing God! Today, people have heaped to themselves teachers who will tell them lies instead of the truth, because people have itchy ears which desire to hear physically comforting words about having their best lives right now in this world. (II Tim. 4:1-4) These teachers have put together clever packages of teachings which tell us God has great things in store if you can only prepare your life in the right way, and gain the right kind of knowledge. We are no longer taught to seek God first and His righteousness in our lives. (Matt. 6:31-34) No longer are we taught to love our neighbors and visit those who are sick and in prison. (Matt. 25:31-46) Instead, we are taught who we should try to live next to and rub elbows with to get ahead in this world. No longer are we taught to give our all, even our very lives, for the sake of telling the truth. (Rev. 12:10-11) No longer are we taught that the world will hate us for what we believe, and the world will even seek to destroy us. (John 15:18-21) No longer are we taught that in the end we may leave this old world like Noah, having only boarded eight people including himself onto the ark he spent decades building. No, today we are taught that if we are suffering, it's only in preparation for some great big spectacular future in ministry; or the only reason we haven't got a big church, or the reason the church we attend is only a couple of families, or less, is because we have failed to prepare or apply the right wisdom keys.

This shows us just one of the many problems this teaching brings. Once we have taken on the idea that God wants us all to prosper greatly, it becomes a symbol for judgment on the part of others. Many Christians think you

can tell who is, and who is not, truly following God by who has and who has not. The true believer is made out to be the one who is foolish, while the prosperity teacher sets in his mega church and offers it as a symbol of how right he is. However, the Bible tells us, "To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven;" Ecclesiastes 3:1; and my friends, times are changing!

That upward swing man thought all his ideas were taking him on is not such a long ride as he thought! The economic situation in the world today is grim, and many people are looking to the governments of this world to make it all better again. They are crying for peace and safety, but they do not see the sudden destruction which is coming upon them. (I Thess. 5:3) This is not a simple "slump" we are in. What it really is, is just a matter-of-fact. We live in a time when many people of the world are over consuming at an alarming rate, and even going into big debt to do it. The Bible tells us it's not a healthy lifestyle, nor is it sustainable. (Luke 12:15-21) Yet all the government seems to be able to talk about is getting the "credit market" going again so people can go right back to that lifestyle. We also hear the word "bailout" a lot these days, and what most of that is referring to is the bailing out of the very companies and people who have been irresponsible in the first place. What we are seeing is a total lack of exactly what the Bible tells us we must have.

Now, I'm not trying to be glum and discouraging, but the truth is that many people have and will lose jobs, homes, and many other things of this life. The reason teachers such as myself have held strong against all the prosperity teaching which has been pushed at Christians over the years, is because these times come. It's just the reality of why God must bring this world to an end someday. Evil men and the choices they choose to make will continually bring suffering and pain, in spite of those times when it seems everything is going great. Even when times are "good," there are many many personal stories of crisis. Don't think because you've lost your job or home recently that these things only happen in an "economic crisis." Every year people lose jobs and have trouble finding new ones. Every year people have trouble making ends meet; and whether this happens to just a few or a whole lot of people all at once, the truth is still the same. When you lose a job, a home, that new car you just bought, that is what you have lost; and it can happen to anyone for a number of reasons.

I can't count the number of people I have dealt with over the years who have been deeply disturbed when they got sick or fell on tough times because they thought somehow they had failed to meet some formula the Bible asked of them. They come seeking the answer to, "What did I do wrong that I'm not prospering?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" The truth of the matter is that God is not in

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we made it to verse 5 of chapter 7 of the book of Genesis, which tells us, Noah did all the Lord had commanded him to do. Now, we are ready to board the ark and begin the ride through the flood. Verse 6 tells us simply that Noah was 600 years old when the flood of water was on the earth. In other words, it was in Noah's six hundredth year that the flood occurred, which was one hundred years from where our story of Noah's life begins back in verse 32 of chapter 5.

Verse 7 tells us two very simple but important facts. First, it lists the people who went on the ark, and then it tells us why they got on. In telling us the people who boarded the ark, it does not name names other than Noah. This is because the emphasis in verse 7 is not on the persons as individuals, but on the simple number of people which boarded the ark. Thus, it only tells us their relationship to Noah. We take it for granted that we know only Noah's family was saved, but many people would be tempted to debate this fact if it were not pointed out so clearly. It should still strike us as profound that Noah was the only man who found grace in the eyes of God; and as we covered last time, verse 1 of this chapter tells us Noah was the one whom God found righteous in that generation. However, in that verse, Noah was instructed to bring himself and all his family into the ark. Verse 7 makes it clear, that is exactly what Noah did, but it also emphasizes that no one else followed them.

God had commanded the ark to be built so that whosoever will may come and be saved. All they had to do was believe they needed an ark of safety. They did not have to bow their knee to God or make a confession that they fully believed an inescapable worldwide flood was coming. All they had to do was be worried that Noah might know or be at least somewhat right about a coming disaster. With the way people panic, you'd think that would have been enough for at least someone else to go with them. Yet, all eight of the people listed here were those people Noah was specifically instructed to bring; and while I do not believe Noah had to force anyone on board, as the leader of the family unit, these eight would likely have made the ark their new home just because Noah told them to.

Noah's time was truly a world where no one was paying attention to anything but selfish desires, right up to the day the water began to fall! (Matt. 24:37-39) Eight people! That's profound, especially in light of how much man worships his fleshly existence. There is a lot of mysticism in the world which goes all the way back to whatever idea different people have about how man was originally created. There is a lot of lore in the world about the first woman who is the mother of us all, and the worship of the fertility of

women is large in pagan religion. However, here at the flood the fact only eight people were willing to board the ark, sends man through a significant genealogical bottleneck. One should appreciate the fact, all the human genes which do and ever have existed came from just Adam. This means, the gene pool we see as so diverse today was accomplished by the fact genes contained in Adam had the ability to diversify the outcome of future generations. However, with the introduction of sin, man began a physical degeneration; and this process of degeneration was well underway before the flood.

The system of childbirth was designed to create unique individuals, and in short, we should not attempt to create carbon copies of ourselves. Adam and Eve contained such diversity that there was no chance for them to create carbon copies; but because of degeneration, no other human pair would contain as much diversity of genes as that first pair did. Each person born only represents a declining fraction of the original gene pool. Today, if family members too closely related attempt to have children, there will be bad consequences because of the lack of diversity in the genes. In this, we should see that diversity is not the enemy of man, it's the design of God; and man's growing attempts to go in the direction of cloning is just another example of men desiring things which are against the plan of God. Attempting to restrict the gene pool as Hitler desired, in an attempt to only end up with one kind of human, won't build a super race, it will kill the human race!

Now, one of the reasons we see the, don't marry your sister or even cousin, rule so clearly today is because of what happened at the flood. Verse 7 makes it clear there were exactly four male/female couples who boarded the ark, and three of the males were the direct result of one of those couples already. Only the genes which Noah's three daughters-in-law brought to the mix were diverse from what Noah and his wife contained. What this means is that most of the diversity built into man from the beginning was wiped out with the flood. The loss of The Tree Of Life insured that no individual would ever physically live forever. That brought the truth that we would lose much of the gene pool from earlier generations just with the passage of time. What we should note here is, as much damage as that truth could have eventually done by six thousand years from creation - which is roughly where we are now - the flood changed everything. The fact only eight people boarded the ark, pretty much insures man, as a species, has lost the ability to go on indefinitely. No matter how far and wide we attempt to re-mix the genes we have left, we are still one big family. The end of all flesh had truly come before God! (Gen. 6:13) It's a point of irony that man desires to make it worse.

The fact we are all truly just one big family makes the way we act toward one another ridiculous indeed! As diverse as we see mankind as being today, and as much prejudice as there can be based on that fact, can you imagine how much more diverse the world could have been? Can you imagine just how much more people may have had problems accepting the fact we all came from one man, if we had not been narrowed down? When you look at the religious practices of past cultures, as well as some present, there are/is in many, the idea that only the specific people who hold that religion are the descendants of the first humans, or that somehow they represent a pinnacle of human existence. There can be a sense in many religions which tends to cut out all other people as if they are less than human. I have often even heard people in "Christian" churches talk about wanting to marry off the young people in the church so they can have children and grow the church. The idea of Christians growing the church through child-birth is absurd. The gospel is about whosoever will may come, (Mark 3:32-35, Luke 9:23-25, Rev. 22:17) and history proves that even getting direct family members to follow God can be as tough as anything you will ever strive to do. So, why do people desire to do this? The answer is that we are still thinking fleshly thoughts instead of Godly ones. (Isa. 55:7-11)

At the very least, man's religion is often intended to wipe diversity from the group or even the world. Because religion is a man-made invention, we should understand religions, for the most part, are simply reflecting the thoughts which reside in the hearts of the people who invent them. Whether it ever had a religious context or not is irrelevant to the fact this idea is one which man carries with him. Many white people held slaves on the idea that a man with very dark skin is no better, if even as good, as an animal. Hitler may not have believed God created a pair of individuals which only the Germans were descendant from, but he certainly felt you could narrow the human race into one specific gene pool to create a super race of humans who were superior to all others. This thought also led to the belief there were those humans who were so valueless they were a hindrance. The "lower" group was not just expendable in his mind, but Hitler saw it as his duty to annihilate them.

We talk about celebrating diversity, but what we continue to see over and over is the rejection of anyone who is different. This is why people, when talking about race, often say things like, "I don't see color." That's not celebrating diversity, that's attempting to be blind to it! The problem with race relations - as it's often labeled - is not that we see color, or even that we think we can judge so much from it. The problem is we are bothered so much by just the fact others are different, no matter what their color is compared to ours. Not seeing color is a way of saying, I'm just going to pretend the difference doesn't exist, instead of realizing it's OK for people to be different.

This is something which, Lord willing, we will talk about more in this study as we come to the Tower of Babel verses; but what we should understand, once again, is just what we have lost to sin. God did not break up the party at the Tower of Babel because He wanted us to fight each other. That idea is all ours! God confounded our languages so we would take advantage of the diversity He created us to have in the first place. He did not separate us so we would carry out genocide against another "group," but so diversity would have a chance to survive genocide. It's amazing that even being the descendants of only one family group, we still have trouble even looking upon the faces of our brothers and sisters because the color of their skin, or the shape of their eyes, shows us the diversity which still exists in man. For all our religious practices and worship of fertility itself, the truth is, we hate the results. We attempt to narrow it as much as possible, and when we can not, we often attempt to destroy those whom we see as different!

This is one of the reasons God created the Jewish nation and gave them specific rules about not just melding into the cultures which surrounded them. God did not want all people to become Jewish, nor did He want Israel to hate other people. Israel is to be an example of a Godly culture; and just like the confounding of our language, God was using the Jews to insure that there would be a different culture in this world, no matter how much the world attempted to meld into one big culture which rejects diversity. This fact is one of the main reasons Hitler knew if he was going to build a world with just a super race of humans on it, the first people he needed to destroy were the Jews! It's also why we see such hatred for them and their way of life today, even though the Jews, as a people, exhibit some of the most diversity of physical attributes inside a culture as any culture could. The Jewish population truly is the world in a nutshell! (Isa. 11:10-12)

Now, verse 7 also tells us the simple fact of why these eight people came into the ark. One might think it is odd that this verse does not point out they boarded the ark just because God told them to. However, this is another example of how the Bible is not just repeating itself. It has been made obvious by earlier scriptures, and the overall fact the ark exists in the first place, that Noah was willing to follow the instructions of God. So, here it's being pointed out that Noah and his family are boarding the ark "...because of the waters of the flood." This does not necessarily mean the waters were already on the ground and rising at the point in time they stepped over the threshold; but it does mean that just as Noah believed God a hundred years earlier that he needed to build this ark, so too, now, he believed God that not just the rain, but a destructive flood was coming! Again, just the belief there might be something to Noah's preaching was all that was required for others to do the same!

Verse 8 confirms to us that Noah accomplished what he had been told to do. He had taken the clean animals, the unclean animals, the birds of the air, and everything which

creepeth on the earth, just as God had told him. He did not extrapolate, or negotiate, or cut corners. God was not unhappy with Noah because he had failed in his task or made choices contrary to God's plan. Verse 9 continues this truth. The animals went in two by two, the male with his female, just as God had commanded. Now, these verses' wrap-up may seem unimportant, but when you put them in light of other Biblical stories you see, they are important. Just as now, so too before the flood. Man has and has always had a free will. One of the very reasons the ark was build was so man would have a literal physical option for escaping the fact God had determined to destroy the world. In no way was the flood an attempt on God's part to thwart man's free will.

Noah was a man, and it was important that he maintain control over his mind and body in order to do the will of God. Noah had planned and built on the ark for 100 years. He was just that much older and tired when the command came that there were only seven days left before he would see all the destruction which the ark was prepared to save them from. Yet, Noah did it all, right down to the last detail, without fail. What a Godly example this man was, and because of God's Word, still is to us today!

It's important we understand, Noah had a choice even in the face of being given the task of saving man's existence on this planet. It's important because it speaks volumes about why it was imperative the job of building the ark be given to a righteous man. Truth is truth, and the truth was that the flood was coming. All those who refused to board the ark were going to die, but if the ark had not been built in the first place, it would be the end of everything we know. Noah was up to the task, but this fact is why Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (I Pet. 1:18-21, Rev. 13:8) Only a perfect man could live a life totally without sin, and be the perfect sacrifice necessary to make his resurrection a forgone conclusion upon his death. The good news that with God even the resurrection of the dead unto new life is possible, could not be entrusted to any man or being. So, just as Abraham understood, God would provide Himself a Lamb! (Gen. 22:7-8) We do not have to fear that God's plan of salvation is somehow flawed or carried out improperly. We know, through Jesus Christ, that salvation is possible and real!

As individuals, we do not have to worry about what man gets right or wrong or where man's differences in thought may lead different people. It's OK to be different, because salvation is personal. Every man must choose for himself if following God is what he wants to do with his life. The teaching of the gospel is not an attempt to destroy diversity; it's simply the teaching of the truth that all those willing to seek a personal relationship with God will receive a crown of life, and those who do not, will suffer the consequences of leaving this world without God! There is no magical ticket of salvation. Just like Noah, we must seek to hear the voice of the Lord. Walking with the Lord is the only way to hear the call, "it's time to board!" (Jer. 7:22-24, John 10:27-28, Rom. 10:13-17)

Now in this portion of the Scripture, we see a great example of how much we need to be careful not to get hung up on the chapter and verse separations. I know I talk of this a lot, but that is because it's very important people understand and remember the chapter and verse separation have no meaning to the Scripture itself. There was an attempt to make the separations follow a natural flow of breaks in thought, but sometimes I wonder if it would have been better if they had not. This is due to so many people thinking that the separations, especially of chapters, has some meaningful context to what is being said. Often that can be very distracting from the truth, and one of the best examples is actually here in front of us.

If you look down these verses of Genesis, you will see breaks which are, in my opinion, better to recognize than those created by just the chapter separations. If you go back to the end of chapter 5, you see a good breaking point. The genealogy has been laid down from Adam all the way to Noah, whom the next major story is going to involve. Thus, chapter 6 begins a new segment. However, this segment only goes through verse 8. It should not be missed that God was talking in a very general sense here. He was not giving instruction to Noah. Instead, these verses show us why God was going to give instructions. The earth was corrupt; the thoughts of men's hearts were evil continually; this grieved God at the heart, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Verse 9 of chapter 6 takes us out of the heavens and down to the level where man's eyes see things. Here we see God talking directly to Noah about what and why He is going to do what He had determined to do. This was coupled with what God wanted Noah to do. That brings us to chapter 7 verse 1 which moves us ahead in time to the point where Noah had done what God asked of him, and the time had come for the final steps before the event. This segment tells us the more detailed plan of what to do with the animals. All Noah needed to start with was the general instructions for the ark and a general layout of the plan. However, God had to give more specific instructions as each step progressed. When the time came to load the ark, Noah needed the specifics about exactly what God wanted. That's what verse 1 through verse 5 of chapter 7 covers. These are God's instructions for what specifically, in the last days before the flood, needs to be put on the ark.

All these things were likely at hand by the time this instruction is given, and a place for all the people and animals had already been made. Now was the time to put all things at hand into the specific places which had been prepared for them; and that brings us to chapter 7 verse 7 through verse 10. These verses round out the story to tell us, all God's instructions had been followed. Noah and his family had gotten on the ark. They had placed all the animals on the ark just the way God had instructed them to. Then, just as God had said, the seventh day passed, and the waters of the flood came upon the earth. The entire layout from start to finish tells us why God was going to destroy the earth, how He was

going to do it, how men could escape it, the fact Noah had been obedient to God, and the fact there was no repenting of the plan. "...The waters of the flood were upon the earth." Genesis 7:10

Verse 11 is where we move again into a little different view. This verse is where the narrative of the actual event begins. No more are we just seeing instructions about what to do, or descriptions of the fact it was done. This verse moves us into real time with what is actually being done! Again, we are not seeing the repeating of facts, but the actual story of the flood just as it happened. This is why verse 11 starts by saying, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life,..." We are picking up with where we left off at the end of chapter 5. The genealogy told us the ages of men when they begat their son, and then the age they were when they died, and then the age their son was when he begat his son, and so on. This comes all the way down to telling us the age Noah was once he begot all three of the sons which went with him on the ark. However, here in verse 11, instead of being told Noah's age at death, we are told his age at the time the flood came upon the earth. In fact, we are told even the exact month and day of Noah's life when the new beginning of man's existence began!

This has direct relationship to the fact Genesis 1:1 tells us, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Then the steps of creation are laid out in a day by day format. Here in Genesis chapter 7, we can ride with Noah and his family in the ark in more of a day by day experience. From this verse, we know more than just the fact it rained for forty days and forty nights. Later, we will be told the number of days before the water "asswaged." Then we will be told the day the ark came back to ground, time periods for what Noah did to see how things were progressing, and later, the exact day of Noah's life in which he steps off the ark.

The story of the flood is very important to where we are today. God wants us to have a grip on exactly what happened. He even wants us to have a very personal view of what the sequence of events were. The story of the flood must not be a cartoon or fantasy in our minds. God wants us to understand, it really did happen, right here on this very ground you and I walk. As we study our world and the fact the Bible lays out a time period of years, not in the tens of thousands, and certainly not in the millions, since the creation of this planet, we must understand the flood was like a fast-forward journey through time! Both the human race, as well as the planet, experienced degeneration which would have taken a far more significant period of time to happen. This speaks again to the ideas some have about thinking evolution is true or that God used a process like evolution to create. People are always wanting to look at one or two scriptures to develop or, in reality, support the theories they would like, but the Bible is not so weak. The Word of God is emphatic in many of the places and on many of the subjects

which most people attempt to interpret something outrageous from. When we do not read the Bible for ourselves, when we do not seek to know it for ourselves, if we do not develop a personal relationship with The Word, we can fall to many of these false teachings, because we do not see the emphases for ourselves. Read for yourself, because the truth is there!

Even as bad as some English "translations" of the Bible are, and as many false doctrines as some, like the New International Version, have built right into them, there should still be a sense as you read them that there is something wrong with specific wording; because often the specific wording does not line up with the emphatic emphasis contained in the overall text. You can claim that John chapter 1 verse 1 in the KJV is mistranslated as the Jehovah's Witnesses do, and say there should be an "a" in there which makes it read, "...and the Word was a God." instead of "...and the Word was God." You can then use that as an argument that Jesus is a lower emanation of God or from God, instead of God incarnate; but the idea does not hold water. Even by looking at just the emphatic emphasis of what John is saying in that very chapter, you see the theology is wrong. He does not just say "...the Word was God." and leave it at that. John goes on through the chapter telling us, "The same was in the beginning with God." He says, "All things were made by Him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Even if you look at the "translation" the JW's use, they could not totally cut out the truth. They translate the third verse, "All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence." If you are only thinking about this world, you can make the argument that, that is all this verse is talking about; but again, that does not fit with the overall emphasis of the Word. God tells us there is more than just what we see here, (Gen. 28:12, Matt. 16:19, 18:10 I Pet. 1:12) and John emphasizes that nothing, not a single thing, came into existence without Jesus! Jesus came down and was begotten as a man on this earth; but if Jesus had been created by God at some past point instead of being God Himself, then Jesus would have come into existence without Jesus. John makes it clear that was not the case. Jesus is God! (Phil. 2:5-8)

Next time, we will talk about some of the stories man calls "creation accounts" and their direct connection to the story of the flood. Man is always thinking himself to be wise, but often just shows how foolish he really is, and how resistant he is to just trusting in the God Who made all things. (Rom. 1:19-23) Truly rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. (I Sam. 15:22-23)

Until next time, Shalom!

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the business of prospering us just because we serve Him. God is in the business of helping us find and stay in a place of repentance from the things of this world. It's His desire that we not be distracted by the things of this life so we can focus on growing our relationship with Him. (Luke 18:18-27) This is not to say we will not at times be comfortable, or that God wants us to be miserable all the time. However, time moves forward, and those who are focused on the things of this world put great stock in whether they see what they feel is progress or not. This progress is measured by what they have, what they feel they have built, and/or how comfortable they are day by day; but this is not what a true believer in God should be focused on. Wisdom is not finding fortune, nor is the symbol of wisdom having fortune. Wisdom is knowing the Word of God; and it tells us, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:11-14

I'm deeply concerned that there are so many people in hard times these days that we are going to see a falling away from God in a way which we have never seen before. It's bad enough that the church has taught so many false perceptions, that numerous people set in the pew for years and never truly find a walk with God; but now many of those people will come to the conclusion that God has left them, or worse, that God's Word is a lie! If we are taught that God's Word tells us living for Him brings prosperity and physical comfort, there can be no other logical conclusion to our - fall on tough times - than that God is not telling us the truth, or that we have failed no matter how hard we have tried. This is the draining of hope in God and His power to save us. All this is why it is so important that we read the Word for ourselves, and not just let others - no matter who they are - tell us what it says.

Paul says in Romans 3:4 to let God be true, but every man a liar. This is because of this simple fact: If we take the word of a man and he is wrong, then when it is proven he is wrong, we doubt God. When we choose to doubt God, we lose the true strength we need to walk this life! Losing our trust in God is something - now more than ever - we cannot afford to do. This is why there always used to be a surge in church attendance when tough times came. People understood that when times got tough and they lost the comforts of life, God was the only thing which was true! They understood that what they had been focused on was the lie of a temporal life's gain. They had believed this life and the pleasures of sin for a season was what had value,

and they realized what a wrong thought pattern that was to have. (Heb. 11:24-26) In repenting of the things of this world, they turned from death unto life. However, where will people turn in a world where even the church teaches that things of this world, even money itself, is a gage for whether you are truly serving God?

It has long been true that the greatest threat to America, and any country in this world, is the dust on the family and/or personal Bible, or the lack of one at all. However, this is true in these times more than ever before! So, if you are wondering what you should do in this time of trouble, which will likely only get worse, at least for a time, the answer is to dust off that Bible, crack it open and begin to read God's Words for yourself. Step into the Bible with the belief that God is true and every man is a liar. What you will find is that men will lie to you, often for their own personal gain; but God loves you and will never leave you nor forsake you. (Heb. 13:5) What you will find is that God has made this life, which man has corrupted with sin, a temporary experience; so we do not have to worry about all which surrounds us. (Gen. 3:22-24) We can simply worry about our walk with Him and growing in His righteousness. This is why Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you. Now, you may have heard many teachers teach that means prosperity. However, you will find by reading Matthew chapter 6 for yourself that the previous verses dispute that claim. Jesus told us to consider the lillies of the field and the birds of the air. He points out that they toil not, neither do they sow, yet they have what they need. (Matt. 6:25-32) If you take the time to follow the instruction of Jesus, you will find the birds do not have cars or fancy houses. The lillies do not even have a shelter from the rain. Why? Because they do not need those things!

The natural things God created, live the life they have been given. They do not worry about building a Tower of Babel. (Gen. 11:1-4) They do not worry about overcoming God and His plan for their life. They simply live the life cycles they were created to live, and that is what God is asking of us. Does that mean we will never build anything or have anything which we cannot find growing or lying around? No, but our focus should not be on how big or how fast we can make or build. Our focus should not be on how much we have obtained, or compare that to what others have. (Ex. 20:17) We must choose to walk humbly before God, asking for His will to be done in our lives, and accepting the life our walk with God brings. (Phil. 4:11)

As humans, we must understand the scripture where Job talks about the hope of a tree. If it's cut down or withers, there is a possibility it will sprout again. (Job 14:7-12) However, man does not have this hope. Why? Because while man's fleshly form, which can enjoy all the

things of this life, will return to the ground, the hope and opportunity given by God to man is the chance to live on, not just grow again here on this earth. We must understand that is the true value in human existence. What sets us apart from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field is not the fact man can build bigger castles in the sand, but that we can use this world as preparation for the next. We can turn from building temporal things and worrying about temporal things because this world of temporal things is not the only hope for existence we have. Everything in this life, and world, will turn to dust. Truly from dust it is all made and to dust it shall return. (Psa. 103:13-16, Rev. 21:1)

If you believe the blessings of God are money and things, then you are choosing sand, and that choice will only distract you from the things God truly desires to give you. In spite of how great your life is going, or how bad life is going at the time, the question we all must ask ourselves is, do we believe that God has something more than what this life has to offer? We can see what this life has to offer, and some of it looks pretty good! However, we are constantly being given the opportunity to realize that with many good things of this life comes many bad things. This is why people who had good jobs or great financial packages, which have now been lost, are feeling so doomed. You can have this world by the tail one day, and the next, you're staring at the end of the tiger where the teeth live!

What God desires to give us is not more stress and pain which comes with seeking the sand. What God wants to give us is a life with Him which will never fade, which will never grow old, which will never be affected by an economic down-turn. This is why God tells us in His Word not to set our minds on things of this earth, but to set our minds on the things of God. (Rom. 8:5-6) He tells us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21 These are the truths which should guide our lives.

It does not matter what man has created or what kind of system man creates in the coming years, all God is asking of men is that they do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him! (Micah 6:8) Even this is going to be harder for people today than it has for people in the past, because humility is something the world seems to have lost. Sure, there are many people who are victims of the circumstances, and with the way things are going, our human governments are sure to spread that even further. However, we should all have the humility to stop and take a look at how we are living; because walking humbly before our God

is a personal thing, which the company you work(ed) for, your mortgage company, your bank or your government has nothing to do with. There may be a lot of laws governing the land in which you live, and there may be little to nothing many of us can do to change those laws; but on a personal level, God has not put on us more than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) God sent His Son Jesus, not so we could live irresponsibly, but righteously!

So, open your Bible for yourself, and don't be fooled into reading one of the new interpretations of the Bible which attempt to confirm the false teachings of this modern day. Don't let false teachers and nay sayers tell you you're not smart enough to understand a true translation, or that reading the Bible from cover to cover will overwhelm you. Open your Bible to Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, and read right on through to the amen of Revelation. When you get done, do it again and again. The reason why so many so called ministers will tell you the Bible, or a true translation of it, is too hard for you to grasp is that long ago they rejected the very thing which is necessary for understanding the Scripture. That is why they teach so many wrong things themselves. The only thing you need to grasp when you open the Word of God to the very first verse and begin to read, even if you have never done it before or never had the Bible taught to you before in any way, is the knowledge that only the Holy Ghost can truly bring understanding to your mind and heart - period! (James 1:5)

Since the days of Cain and Abel, the world has never lacked for men who, because of their jealousy, refuse to learn from observing the things of God, and are instead only driven by self-desire to be the ones in the spotlight. Stop sending money to that televangelist - or so called ministry - who tells you that sending them money is the seed of faith. The love of money is the root of all evil, and Jesus said you cannot serve God and mammon. (I Tim. 6:10, Matt. 6:24) One of the qualifications for ministry, according to the New Testament, is that a man not be greedy of filthy lucre. (I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9) One of the last things which makes sense according to the Word of God, is giving money to a minister who talks a lot about money.

This is the kind of true wisdom which you will receive if you are willing to pick up the Word and read it for yourself. If you ask, you will receive; if you knock, the doors will be opened; and if you seek, you shall find. There are many things out there which will try to lead you away from God by telling you the things of this temporal life are what God wants you to have; but don't believe them. God wants to be personal in your life no matter what the world's current circumstances may be - and that's the truth. The rest is just one big castle in the sand! (Matt. 7) ✍