

THE TYRANNY OF SELF AND THINGS

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Genesis 3:1-13

1. Christmas gives us a good opportunity to determine to what degree we are controlled by the culture and our old nature rather than our relationship to Jesus Christ.
2. Many people are in bondage to self and to things, and this is particularly true of those of us who live in developed and affluent countries like the U.S.
2. The fact that many preachers and teachers have managed to deify wealth and personal well-being has compounded the problem.
3. Our problem can be traced back to Adam and Eve and what we refer to as the Fall.

I. Prior to the Fall.

A. Man lived in harmony with:

1. God.
2. God's creation.
3. Each other.

B. In his book, "The Pursuit of God," A.W. Tozer wrote,

"Before the Lord God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him by creating a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are simply called 'things.' They were made for man's uses, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; **without a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him.**"

C. This thought goes along with what Paul wrote in 1 Tim 6:17-18

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, **who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.**

D. For a time Adam and Eve lived as God intended them to live.

E. They enjoyed fellowship with God and each other in an environment that both sustained and delighted them.

F. Adam and Eve had total freedom with one notable exception. Genesis 2:15-17

G. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because God knew it was best for Him to be the Moral Agent in their lives.

II. The Fall.

A. Satan's approach to Eve was designed to:

1. Cause her to rely on her own reasoning rather than trusting God.
2. Get her to question the character and goodness of God.
3. Entice her to dethrone God in her life in favor of self. (Satan knew he could manipulate man if he could isolate man from God.)
4. Get her to desire things rather than to use and enjoy things.

- B. Eve, applying her God-given ability to reason and make moral decisions,
1. Saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh).
 2. Saw that it was also a delight to the eyes (lust of the eyes).
 3. Saw that the fruit of the tree was desirable to make one wise (pride of life).
 4. Dethroned God in her life and enthroned self and things.
 5. Enticed Adam to join her in her revolt (sin is first and foremost rebellion).

NOTE: It is, and always has been, God's intention that we use our ability to reason and make moral decisions to choose right over wrong. We have the ability but not the right to make wrong moral decisions.

- C. Again quoting Tozer:

“But sin has introduced complications and has made those very gifts of God a potential source of ruin for the soul.

Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and ‘things’ were allowed to enter. Within the human heart **things** have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for first place on the throne.

This is no mere metaphor, but an accurate analysis of our real spiritual trouble. There is within the human heart a tough fibrous root of fallen life whose nature is to possess, always to possess. It covets **things** with a deep and fierce passion. The pronouns ‘my’ and ‘mine’ look innocent enough in print, but their constant and universal use is significant. They express the real nature of the old Adamic man better than a thousand volumes of theology do. They are the verbal symptoms of our deep disease. The roots of our hearts have grown down into **things**, and we dare not pull up one rootlet lest we die. **Things** have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. **God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.**

Our Lord referred to this **tyranny of things** when He said to His disciples, “And he said to them all, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.’” (Luke 9:23-24)

NOTE: I would add Jesus' words found in Luke 14:33, “

“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

- D. For Adam and Eve self-gratification and self-glorification led to self-consciousness and self-justification.

- E. Adam and Eve's relationship to God, their environment and each other was forever changed.

III. God's remedy.

A. In Jesus Christ, God again came and walked among men, and set before our minds and hearts Someone who is more desirable than self and things.

B. The Apostle Paul met Jesus and that meeting forever changed his relationship to himself, to others, to this world, and to things. Phil 3:7-11

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

C. Those who have come to Jesus in truth have a new perspective on themselves and the world. 1 John 2:15-17

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

APPLICATION

1. When we embrace Jesus Christ because He has become to us God's “Indescribable Gift” (II Corinthians 9:15) we are delivered from the tyranny of self and things.

NOTE: Next week's message title.

2. We may not live in the Garden of Eden, but our relationship to God, to self, to others, and to things can again be what God intended that relationship to be.

3. Ask God to reveal the beauty and desirability of Jesus Christ to your mind and heart, and let Jesus have His rightful place on the throne of your life.

4. Self and things will lose their power, and you will be set free to use and enjoy all the things God has supplied for us to use and enjoy.