

Choked With Worries And Riches And Pleasures Of This Life

by Hendrik Joubert

It would seem that most of us are able to see *warning signs* in the lives of others more clearly than in our own, and we tend to exclude all *superlatives* as impossible. Consider the implied warning in **Luke 8:14**: *Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.* (NKJV) We would *like to be* rich, *dab into* the pleasures of life, and we are *concerned about* the future of whatever country we live in; however we are not *choked* by these and they *do not* impede our spiritual growth – *we* are in control.

We are socialized to carefully plan our secular *future* with much emphasis placed upon retirement. Investments are carefully monitored as growth is vital. Preparation for eternal life is considered *important*; however it tends to become a ritual directed towards securing prosperity rather than a submission to God *from the heart.* (**Romans 6:17; Ephesians 6:6; Matthew 22:36**)

Our giving becomes an *investment*; perhaps even *payoff money* in hope of a good return. (**Ecclesiastes 11:1; Malachi 3:10**) Our words and actions reveal that we *suppose that godliness is a means of gain* (**1 Timothy 6:5**) as our worship is directed towards improving our chances at getting the treasures of this life. We will quote Scripture to encourage ourselves: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”* (**Matthew 7:7**)

Here we concentrate on the first phrase (*Ask, and it will be given to you...*) and we may prefer the words more specifically directed at the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus in order to help them accomplish their task: *If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.* (**John 14:14**) We are not so careful about learning what the *seeking* and *knocking* is all about so we may better understand the context of the *asking.* We *ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.* (**James 4:3**)

Our actions are spontaneous illustrations of the processes in our hearts and illustrate our faith. (**James 2:18**) The words of the prophet (quoted by Jesus) become oh, so personal: *‘THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME.* (**Matthew 15:8**) We are too busy with our personal, worldly agenda we do not realize that we are demonstrating that our treasure is not in heaven, but rather in life. We shake our heads at the rich young ruler when we refuse to give up much less.

Our earthly patriotism often causes us to act foolishly and speak unwholesome words concerning people in authority. When the apostle Paul learned that he spoke against the high priest, unrighteous as he was, he apologized: *“I did not know, brethren that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’”* (**Acts 23:5**)

There is a difference between evaluating and constructively criticizing the actions and policies of some, however we should not revert to *speaking evil*, even as we do not appreciate others speaking evil of those whom we approve of. (**Jude 1:9; Titus 3:2**) We may justify many things because we are living in a democracy; however our first responsibility and loyalty is to God. Christians should be willing to suffer even as slaves, and as such render service as to God. (**Ephesians 6:5-8**)

Consider the following words spoken through Peter: *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:...* (**1 Peter 2:9**) I chose the KJV because of the word “*peculiar*” as it seems to accurately describe the attitude a Christian should have towards many things. This life is temporal, we should not allow the cares of this life to rob us of eternal life by diverting our attention – *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* (**Matthew 16:26**)