

Guard Against The Attractions of This World

¹³ “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.”— Luke 15:13

The young son has now packed all his belongings and his eager desire to explore what the world has to offer has drawn him away from his father’s house to a distant land. There he has the time of his life – ‘wine, woman and song’ as the saying goes – and enjoys all the pleasures of life that money can buy.

This account of the young man’s experiences are typical of many of us, including myself, where at some stage of our youthful life we enjoyed at different degrees the things that the world had to offer – the good, the bad and the ugly. Some of the pleasures of the world – including partying and revelry, drinking, drugs, sexual immorality and the likes - are strong ‘pull factors’ that often get the better of us. This is what may have caused the young man to venture into a distant land and squander all his wealth on riotous living.

Certain spiritual dynamics are also at work amidst the natural experiences of this young man.

1. The Separation

A few day after asking for his inheritance, the young man left his father’s household in search of new adventures in a distant land. First, the following quotation concerning our possessions is instructive:

“You see, heaven—even the highest heavens—belongs to the LORD, along with the earth and all that is in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14). Thinking we own our possessions, cultivates pride, selfishness, and ingratitude. But when we seek Him, God supplies all our needs [food, finances, clothing] because He is faithful in all His promises (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19). God created all things, and He never transferred ownership to His people. We are, however, expected to be faithful and wise managers of all that God has entrusted to us. God rewards faithfulness in caring for our families and finances (Luke 16:10-13)¹.

Remember the conversation the young man had with his father in Luke 15:12, namely:

*The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me **my share** of the estate.’*

He was desirous of getting his possession from his father. Such thinking is fertile ground for the devil to plant seeds of greed, pride, selfishness and ingratitude as stated above. It was not long before these seeds (his thoughts) sprang roots, and moved the young man into action – to leave for the bright lights.

So saddled with his wealth, he left his father's home to a distant land. The spiritual significance should be noted. First, the son left his father's home. This may be likened to a child of God turning his back on the Father and/or leaving the sanctuary of the church. The relationship between 'Father' and 'child' is broken. Second, 'the distant land' not only speaks of the degree of separation from God, but signifies a step back by the young man into the world and its trappings – a life of sin.

What seeds (thoughts) has the devil planted in our minds today? Seeds of lust, envy, jealousy, anger, non-forgiveness, bitterness, gambling, alcohol and drugs? We declare that Holy Ghost fire scorch these seeds and kill them before they take root in Jesus mighty name! Amen!

2. The World Is the devil's Stomping Ground

Jesus himself, as a young man, was tempted by the devil who used the attractions of the world – its power and wealth- as one of his strategies to tempt Jesus to worship him. In Luke 4:5-8, we read:

And he (the devil) led Him (Jesus) up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."

Notice, the devil reminds Jesus that the kingdoms of this world (its power and wealth) and all its worldliness belongs to him. So while we enjoy certain pleasures of this world, like the young man, we are in fact worshipping the devil – the revelry and partying, drugs and sexual immorality are examples of giving glory to the devil. It is called sin.

3. Idolatry: Loving and Worshipping the things of the World More than God

In 1 John 2:15-5 Jesus cautions us about falling in love with the world and loving the things of this world:

"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. 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."

He reminds us that by loving this world and the things of this world we cannot love God. This is called idolatry. We love things (and people) more than we love the Father. God admonishes us against idolatry in Deuteronomy 4:23-24:

"...Do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

In Isaiah 42:8, God gives us the reason why idolatry is a sin, and why we should not commit it.

“I, the LORD, am the One, and I won't give my name and glory to another, nor my praise to idols.”

All praise, glory and honour belongs to God alone, and should not be given to any idol: person or thing! We need to be careful of making idols of our loved ones, our education, our jobs, our power and authority, our cars, houses and other possessions. For God is a jealous God, and although He is merciful and forgiving, idolatry causes Him to become angry. For we give our worship unto things and people and not unto God where it truly belongs!And no one wants to be in the hand of an angry God!

4. Give Time Unto God.

One of the strategies the devil uses is to keep us soooooooooooooo busy with the cares of this world that we neglect the time that we should be spending in devotion with God. The young man in the story spent his time enjoying life ‘to the max’ so that he did not have time for God. Just before I was about to write this devotion, I was tempted to attend to some urgent work in my back yard to alleviate some severe flooding. The rains came briefly this morning and I feared that a downpour was imminent. However, I said no to that temptation. I declare that the God I serve is in control of the rains, and the rains although ominous by the dark grey clouds, will not fall! Instead, I have decided to put God and the things of God first! Believe it or not, the sun is now peeping out through the dark clouds! Just put God first! Everything else will be just fine! Give God His time and make Him your preference, and He will make time for the other things that we need to get done. In doing so, we maintain and strengthen our relationship with God.

5. Be the Light of the World!

The Bible tells us that although we are in the world we are not of the world. In His prayer for His disciples, Jesus prays in John 17:15-17:

“I am not asking that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.”

In other words, although we physically exist in the world, we should not allow the attractions of this world – one of the devil’s strategies - to draw us into a life of sin. We should stand out and be separated

and be like shining lights which enlighten the lives of others with the good news of Jesus Christ. For John 9:5 declares:

"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

Romans 12:2 further encourages us:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Do not let the acquisition of things of this world be your ambition. Instead prayerfully seek out your purpose and pursue it. God, in turn, will bless you all the niceties of life to enjoy:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." - Matthew 6:33

Heavenly Father,

"Thank You for the miracle-working power of Your Word! Forgive me, O Lord, of my sins and renew my mind. I declare that seeds of lust, anger, envy covetousness, pride, selfishness, ingratitude, gambling, drug abuse, alcohol addiction and the likes are rooted out of my mind and heart, in Jesus mighty name! I dismantle all altars of idolatry that I have created in my life through my possessions, loved ones, job, education and the likes. I allow the Holy Spirit to guide me in the efficient use of my time, so that I give quality devotion unto You, O God. I thank You, once again for Your goodness and mercy towards me. Thank You, for allowing me to renew a right relationship with You, O Lord, and to seek after Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Help me to be not of the world, and to be a light that draw others to Your Son, Jesus. In Jesus' mighty name I pray with thanksgiving. Amen."

Memory Verse:

"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."- John 9:5

Notes:

1. <https://www.allaboutgod.com/a-jealous-god.htm>.

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