

It is a fact that we are challenged daily in our walk with the Lord. While it might not necessarily always be evident, the enemy of our faith has all who call Christ Lord, in his sight, and targets us as well to bring temptations to sin, trials and even tribulations.

The Christian walk brings a long list of challenges, the reason we must be equipped with the Word of God to first recognize each and every test by the enemy, but as well to know how to respond and become victorious in Christ Jesus. In Gal 5:19-21 Paul describes the challenges for sin this way: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

Satan is a cunning tempter and a hypocrite who will oftentimes use very subtle means to attack us where we are most weak. That’s why Paul enjoined us in Ephesians 6 to put on the Armor of God, so we can be equipped to both fend off the enemy and move forward as conquerors in our Christian life.

How equipped, ready, able and dedicated are we right now to walk the path that God desires for us?

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While soldiers and police officers might not always be facing attacks, they are conscious of the possibility and always wear armor in the event such attacks occur, so they can fend off the enemy and protect themselves and the people they are responsible for. What is true in the material world is also true in the spiritual realm. The attacks from the enemy of our faith can at times be very subtle as to cause us to be deceived and trapped.

Paul in Eph 6:13 gives us the answer to be ready for such attacks; "Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." James 4:7 adds: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." In other words, we must be prepared and properly equipped with the armor of God, but also be focused and determined to stand by Christ no matter the circumstances.

James wrote: "Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12) Paul in 1 Cor 10:13 said, "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."

Where's our armor at right now?

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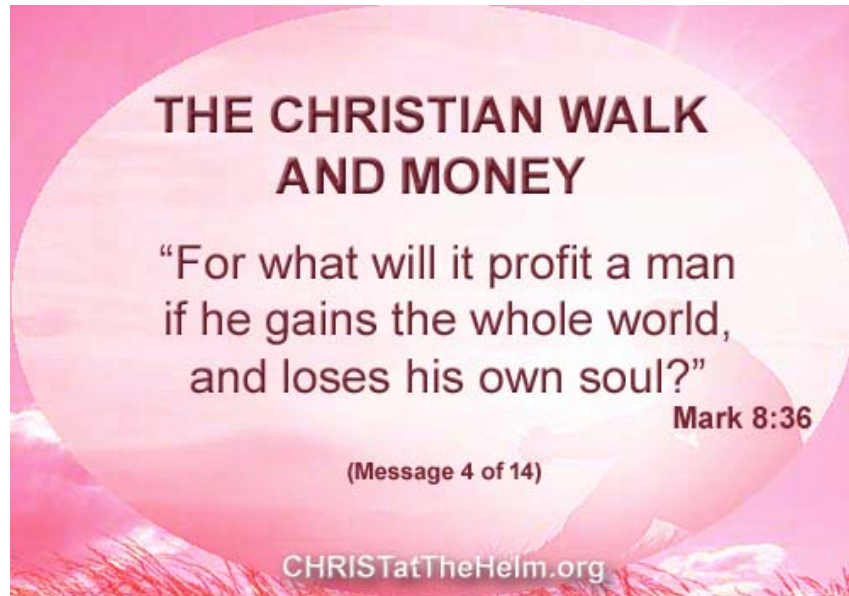
To covet is defined as an inordinate and wrongful desire to appropriate ourselves with pleasurable things that are in the world. It actually can come in many forms, such as money, property, power, even fixated sexual desires, to the point it becomes an obsession.

That's why the apostle John said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15) Jesus warned us in Mark 4:19, "The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." In other words, to covet the world's attractions, pleasures and materialistic possessions chokes whatever seeds planted in us by the Word of God, to render it ineffective.

Coveting is in essence denying and rejecting God's Word. That's why as well Jesus added in Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Let's beware that to covet is to fix our eyes on this world to the point of obsession, rather than focus on the Kingdom of God awaiting us if we are obedient. Let's also remember that covetousness is considered as idolatry by God!

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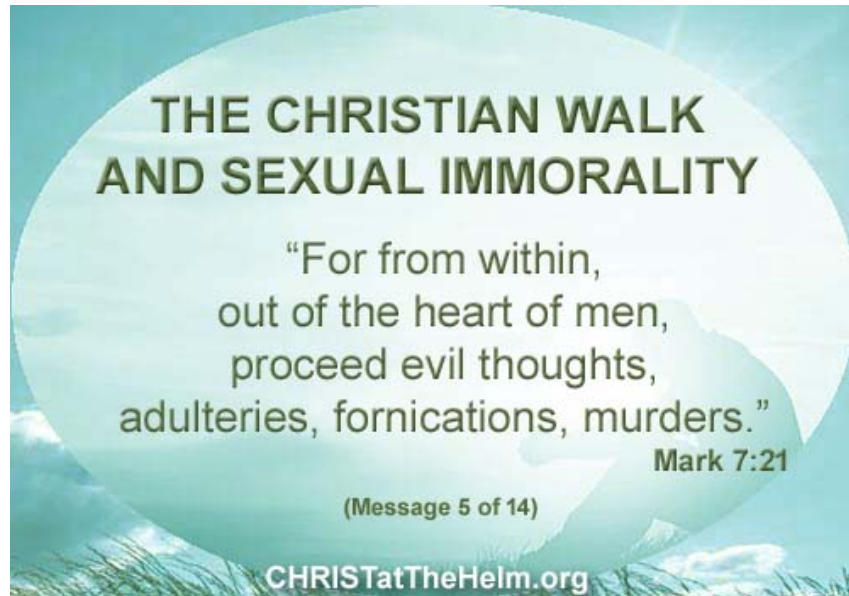
Money, and the lust for the power it gives people, is a strong attraction in this world, as it conveys the illusion that we can have whatever our flesh desire. That's why Paul in 1 Tim 6:9-10 said, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Many who had fortunes and lost them committed suicide as a result, because their lives were focused on money. Jesus warned us in Mat 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

In essence, the attraction of money gives us the illusion that we can have whatever we desire, but in the end, we are never satisfied as the more we have, the more we want, and the process never ends. That why Rev 3:17 says, "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."

Will we choose to serve God, or will money be our god?

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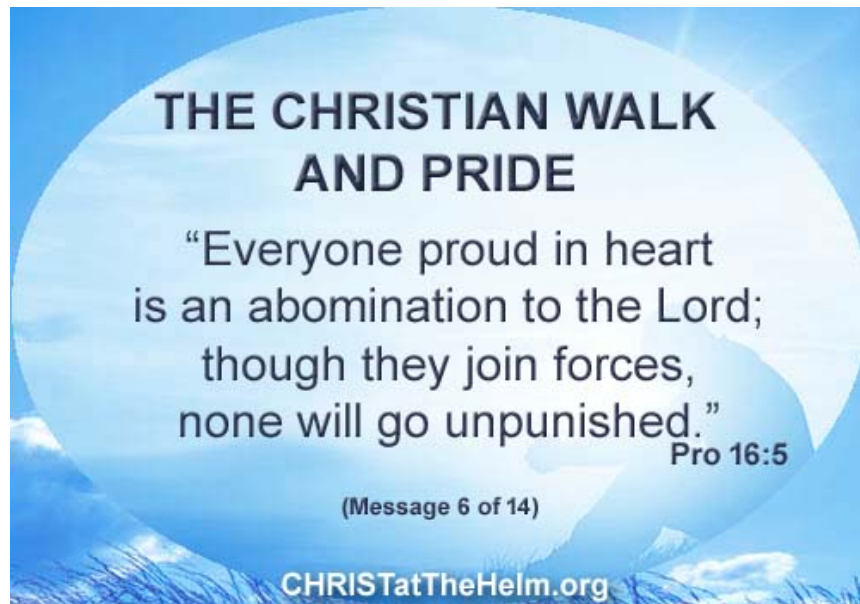
Sexual immorality is condemned throughout the bible, whether in the Old or New Testament Books.

Ex 20:17 says, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” In other words, it is already committing adultery to desire the husband or wife of another person. Jesus confirmed this in Mat 5:28, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Then, Lev 18:22 adds to the list of sexual immorality this way: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination.” Again, this is also confirmed in the New Testament by Paul in Rom 1:27, “Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”

If we profess Christ as Savior and have surrendered our lives to follow His Word, shouldn’t we be determined to abide by His Word, as Paul said in 1 Cor 6:19, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” Will we choose God or the deceptions of the world?

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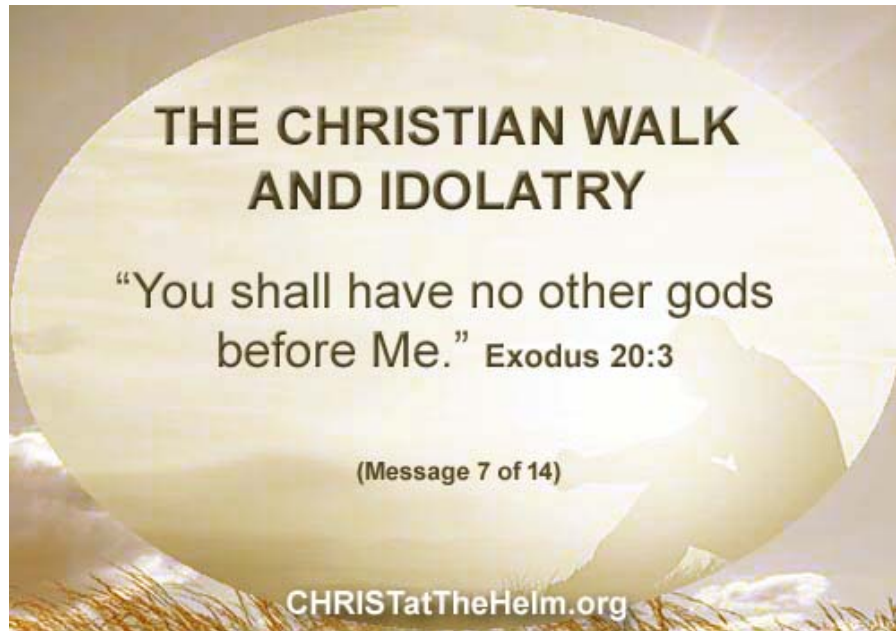
We often hear people say they are proud of their accomplishments, and of who they are on account of what they have achieved. Yet, James 4:6 says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” In other words, God considers pride an insult to Him, and we should rather thank God for having given us the ability to be who we are, and the very essence of life we have.

We sure couldn’t accomplish anything in this life unless God gives us those abilities and power to do so. That’s why in Philip 2:3 Paul said, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” In essence, the very opposite of pride is humility, the notion and realization that it is God who is our source of all abilities and blessings in our life.

Pro 26:12 clearly shows how God sees the proud: “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.” So pride is an insult to God, the reason 1John 2:16 adds, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

The day we face God, will we boast of our accomplishments, or will we humbly thank God for our salvation through Christ?

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To entertain passions for things in our life that become an uncontrollable desire is pure and simply idolatry.

Paul in Col 3:5 said, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." In other words, any intense passion, things of the world, anyone or anything taking precedence over God in our life is idolatry.

In Col 2:18 he added, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *fa*lse humility and worship of angels." Clearly as well, worshipping any other than God Himself is idolatry, and that includes praying to anyone but God through Christ, our Savior and Lord. That's why there aren't any intercessors between God and man other than Christ Jesus who died for us, as He is the only One who has power to plead for us to God. Let's not be deceived and know that Christ isn't too busy nor does He need others to intercede in our favor as "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Let's ask ourselves two questions, "Is there anything or anyone in my life that takes preeminence over God and Christ? Do I let anything in my life control me that has become an idol?"

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In this life, we consistently encounter people who rub us off the wrong way. It can be as a result of their abrasive personality, wrongs they have done to us, their lifestyle or simply because they are pure evil.

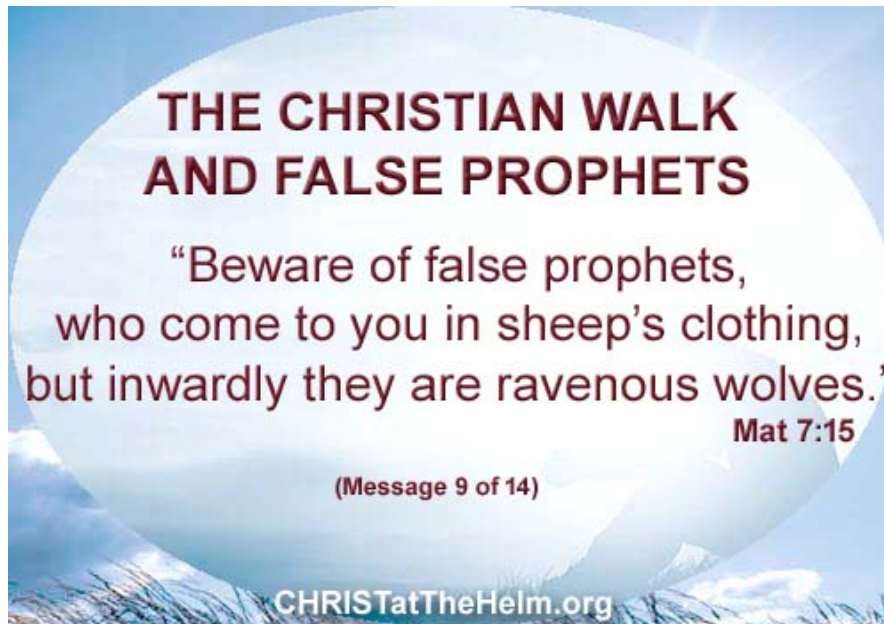
If we simply think of politics right now in our country, it is more than evident that much hatred is way out of proportion. In Titus 3:2, Paul gives us the attitude we should have, as believers in God and Christ; “Speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” Let’s note that this attitude isn’t meant only for those who think and act like us, as it clearly specifies, “to all men”.

Is it easy? We’d be lying if we answered “yes”. In 1John 4:8, the apostle states, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” The very words of Jesus in John 3:16 saying “For God so loved the world,” clearly show us that God loves the sinner while obviously hating sin.

Hatred doesn’t belong in the heart of believers. Loving our neighbor, as Christ enjoins us, is not as an option, but is rather a commandment. In addition, “our neighbor” as defined in the Word of God is anyone but ourselves.

The antidote to hatred is to love anyone to the point of desiring they be saved! Let’s remember that God is love!

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One very serious challenge we get as Christians, is the deception sown by false prophets. It comes under many disguises, even through fake preachers whose only goal is pride and personal gain. Jesus warned us clearly when He said in Mat 7:21-23, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

In 1John 4:1, the apostle put it this way; “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Paul added in Col 2:8, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

In other words, we must be equipped to recognize false prophets, and Christ, the Word of God, is our only resource to protect ourselves. How much of God’s Word do we spiritually feed on daily?

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Scripture refers to people who are constantly angry as fools. Anger is defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility.

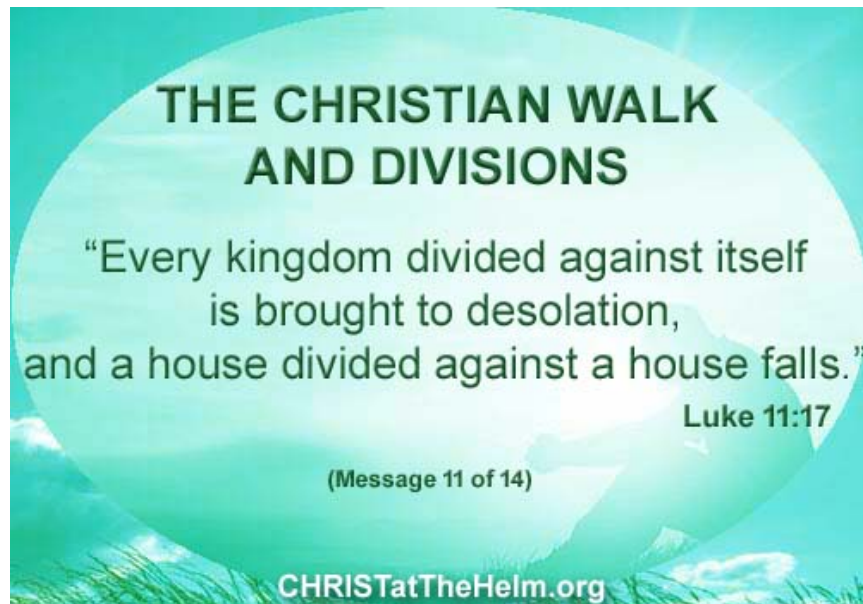
Then, what is the source of anger in a person's heart?

James explained it this way: “Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires* for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.” (James 4:1-2) Isn't it what our world displays right now? All conflicts have for deep rooted cause pride, to desire, possess and control through violence, murders, even wars. Anger, in a person's heart, acts as a cancer to joy and peace.

On another level, we find conflicts within families, within brothers and sisters in Christ, and yet again, it always has its source in the desire to be right, to covet, and the pride of life. Jesus in Mat 5:23-24 gave us this command: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Are we harboring anger in our hearts or do we have His peace that passes understanding?

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Paul in 1Cor 12:24-25 addressed the problem of division within the church this way, “God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.”

In other words, it isn't a matter of who's the greatest, the more anointed, or the more eloquent member, but rather all members of the body of Christ are equal in front of the Lord. What God has done is impart each of us with the talents and knowledge He chose with corresponding responsibilities, for the sole purpose of serving Him and edifying the body of Christ to His glory.

To the Romans Paul said, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Rom 16:17-18) In Ephesians 4:2-3 he added, “With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Isn't Jesus the One and only to follow, and are we?

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We live in a society of material abundance, and unfortunately, the more we possess, the more we want. Pro 3:9 however gives us the core heart attitude we must have towards our possessions this way:

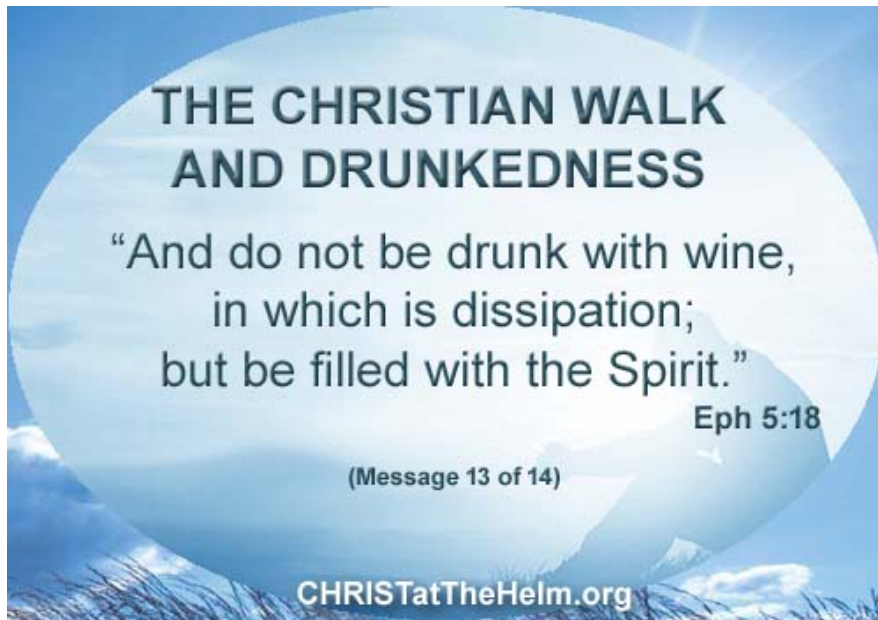
“Honor the LORD with your possessions.”

How is that done? Jesus said in Luke 6:38, “Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” The very interesting notion that Jesus gave us is that God will use the same measure with us as we apply to others.

The apostle John added, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1John 3:17) In other words, God sees our heart, and knows whether we truly are surrendered to Him, even in our finances, or rather only pretend to love Him! In Acts 20:35 Paul said, “And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Are we so attached to the things of this world that we won’t surrender our possessions to God? Let’s make sure that money doesn’t become the focus of our life and a god!

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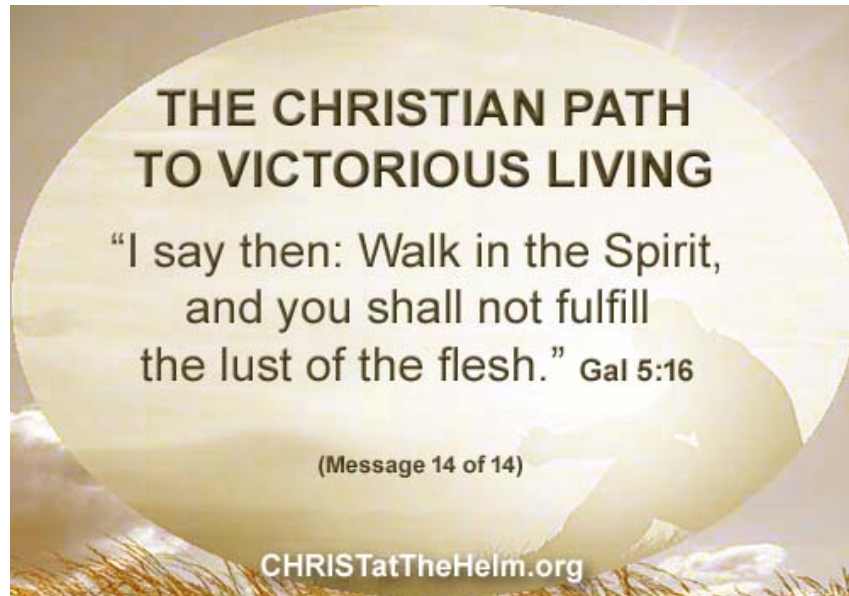
Dissipation is defined as a dissolute way of living by being wasteful through excessive drinking. In our common vernacular, we call such people addicts, because alcohol or drugs have taken control of their lives so that nothing else matters to them.

Isaiah 5:11 highlights it: “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, *that* they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, *till* wine inflames them!” In essence, alcohol and drugs can become a trap that enslaves people to the point of destruction in their life’s relationships, health and common sense.

Jesus even warned us about being entrapped by such things; “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.” (Luke 21:34) In other words, we never know when our time to meet the Lord will be and we should always be sober and vigilant to live according to God’s will and path for us.

The apostle Paul encouraged us to live soberly here: “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.” Rom 13:13-14

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If we reflect for a moment as to the reasons why our hearts might be attracted to the things of the world, wouldn't it be simply because the common denominator is that we actually fail to set our hearts on God, His Word, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ?

In other words, if our minds and hearts are focused on living for God, the enemy has a much difficult task to tempt us. Jesus said in John 15:7-8, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. This tells us that our very source of faith and strength is found in God's Word.

Peter warned us this way: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1Peter 5:8) The apostle John added: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1John 5:4-5)

In essence, let's keep watch over our lives so that we live as we say we believe, and draw from the power of God rather than submit to the enemy.

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