

Materialism

Satan's Battle Against the Soul

Materialism is simply defined as “the tendency to be more concerned with material than with spiritual or intellectual values” (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). While the Scriptures do not use this word specifically, the principle is warned against throughout. It is condemned with its accomplices greed, lust, and anxiety (1 Tim. 6:9-10; Matt. 6:24). The Bible says, “But 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. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness” (1 Tim. 6:9-10). **Materialism trips us, traps us, drowns us, and destroys us.**

Yet, we often side-step the issue by thinking this only applies to the “wealthy.” Most of us see ourselves as middle- or lower-class, but by global standards, the poorest of us (Americans) are rich: If we own our home or a vehicle, have enough food to eat and are even able to go out to a restaurant occasionally, and have extra clothes in our closet, we are rich. When the Bible gives commands “to the rich,” we ought to listen.

Living in a worldly society, however, often causes us to assume the attitudes of those around us and believe certain “materialism myths”:

Myth #1: Wealth equals happiness. Notice that the Bible says that “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” (1 Tim. 6:9). The pleasures of sin are fleeting and only lead to condemnation (Heb. 11:25). “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with *many sorrows*” (1 Tim. 6:10, emphasis added).

Myth #2: Wealth equals importance. In today's social order, money is often associated with power and prestige, yet the Scriptures teach otherwise. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty” (1 Tim. 6:17). Wealth can cause us to think too highly of ourselves. We can forget Jesus' command to be a servant and His warning that “God resists the proud” (Matt. 20:26; Jas. 4:6).

Myth #3: Wealth equals security. Satan tries to convince us that money will keep us safe, that it will buy us protection. This concept is illustrated in Luke 12: The wealthy farmer thought he was invulnerable, because his barns were full. Nevertheless, his possessions could not save his soul. 1 Timothy 6:7 says, “We brought nothing into this

world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out,” and verse 17 commands us not “to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God.”

So how do we overcome materialism and its myths? What steps can we take to protect ourselves and our families from this terrible snare? Consider these commands from 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Trust in God. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” Riches are unreliable but the living, benevolent God is ever-faithful. If we will put our confidence in Him, He will supply all things (cf. 2 Cor. 9:8).

Do good. “Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.” The best way to rid ourselves of greed is to start giving. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary defines the phrase “ready to give” as “free givers; the heart not cleaving to possessions, but ready to impart to others.” Only when we are doing good are we truly rich.

Store up for eternity. “Storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” The possessions we have while living here will not follow us into eternity (cf. 1 Tim. 6:7), and when we are giving our possessions away, we are actually saving up for eternity. We must, therefore, “lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 6:20).

We are at war! Satan is using even the innocent things of this world to capture our attention and draw us away from the Lord. We must be sober and vigilant, avoiding the pitfall of this dangerous “ism.” “This world is not my home. I’m just a passing through. My treasure are laid up somewhere beyond the blue” (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11).

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