

## **“HOW MUCH CAN WE ENDURE” by Don Myers**

In Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had a considerable amount to say about earthly concerns and possessions. One of the greatest dangers in our spiritual journeys is the way we deal with money and possessions. Included in those directions and cautions were: 1) not giving to others for the praise of men (6:3); praying for our daily bread (6:11); practicing fasting (6:18); not storing up treasures on earth (6:19); serving God, not wealth (6:24); cease worrying about the necessities of life (6:25); caution about being surrounded by people of the world who are absorbed with making and having wealth (6:32); and, to live one day at a time—tomorrow will take care of itself (6:34).

Here are a few thoughts on Jesus’ words.

First, just like the indicators in our automobiles (gas gauge, temperature gauge, seat belt warning, etc.), there are some things (if we will keep an eye on the dashboard of our hearts) that give us a quick check on where we are spiritually. Have we ever caught ourselves making sure others knew we did something good for some poor soul with materials and goods that really belong to God—possessions given to us by God? Jesus said something about letting our light shine so God could be glorified. Oh, we can have some very sneaky (yet, unwitting) ways of parading those benevolent acts before the eyes of others. Jesus said that we are to never give to get! Giving-to-get is totally out of the heart of God. We should never give to others to receive the notice of others. Why do we do that?! When we give to get praise of others, we do not really give, but we make a purchase of the praise of men. That, of course, would mean that our eye was not on God at all. It is as if we push God aside and demand that people notice us.

Second, can I become so absorbed about what I will eat, drink, or wear tomorrow that I forget to pray and truly be thankful for my DAILY bread today? When my wife, grandson, and I sit down to eat, I often comment to them with my full plate before me, “This is our living.” I can only eat so much in a day—and, no more. Have you ever bought a car (new or used) and found yourself soon

looking for or talking about the next car you wanted to buy? Daily bread? Daily necessities? Eat what is in front of you without thinking about what you will eat tomorrow. Do you remember the Israelites gathering more manna than they needed in a day? What was left over bred worms! Wear what you have on without thinking about the next garment you will put in your full closet.

Third, Jesus did not say, "If you fast," but "when you fast." Jesus assumed His disciples would fast. Of course, we cannot check on each others' fasting, or report to others, "I am fasting," because we would come under Jesus' caution not to fast in order to be seen of men. But, during times of fasting, we temporarily break from earthly necessities to devote ourselves to prayer and, possibly, to be reminded how dependent we are on God's provision. Someone said, "God stays in touch with every man through his belly." God causes His rain to come on the just and the unjust. The just need to raise their eyes to heaven and, from the heart, say, "Thank you, Lord God."

Fourth, have you ever been perfectly content only the next moment to see a TV commercial asking if you are ready for retirement and become instantly discontented? Billions of dollars are spent on advertisements crafted by college-educated professionals who are skilled in creating discontent? And, they are great at it! Carl Wade said something akin to, "I was perfectly content with my little motor boat until a \$32,000 Ranger bass boat with a 225 HP Honda engine zipped by me!" Can we become possessed by our possessions? Was it Jack Exum who said, "Is it possible that we are buying things we do not need and cannot afford to keep up with people we don't even like?"

Fifth, are you concerned about running out of food or clothing? Jesus said for us to stop worrying about the necessities of life. Have you ever been hungry? Have we missed many meals? Our God who provided for us yesterday is the same God who gives us our daily bread. Our concern as Christians is to be surrendered to the reign of Jesus, the Lord, and all these other things will be provided as God sees our need. Ashur prayed, Two things I asked

of You, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God (Proverbs 30:7-9). The all-knowing God sees into the marrow of our souls. Only He knows the right balance of earthly blessings we can stand without it corrupting us.

Sixth, it is hard to keep earthly and material things in perspective when we are immersed in a sea of national and international greed. Yet, those people seeking to have and have more are miserable! Yes, they are!! Things cannot satisfy. The next time we get ready to buy that shiny new car or truck it might serve our best interest to throw a bucket of mud on it and compare it to the vehicle we drove onto the sales lot. We might just consider driving home the car we drove in there. We've got the wrong heroes. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be free of the earthly chains that bind us? What if we could simply be satisfied with the simple—today's food, clothing, and drink? We are not going to carry it with us. There are no pockets in a shroud.

Finally, are we trying to live in tomorrow to the extent that we are failing to attend to the challenges of today? Aren't today's challenges enough without stacking tomorrow on our shoulders? Have you heard of the man walking down the road on a 100-degree afternoon sweating while carrying a one hundred pound sack on his back? A man came along side him in a horse-pulled wagon and asked, "May I give you a ride?" To this offer, the grateful man replied, "Yes, oh thank you!" The burdened man climbed in the back of the wagon and the benevolent man urged his horse forward only to hear the man in the back of the wagon grunt. Turning around, the driver of the wagon saw the man whom he had picked up standing in the back of the wagon with the one hundred pound sack still on his back! The man asked, "Why don't you put down that sack?!" To this the man, in great relief, replied, "I did not know when you offered me a ride that that applied to my sack." Are we still straining under loads Jesus has long before

offered to carry for us? Peter said, “Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

What would Jesus know about life? Why, God made the world, hence He knows how it works! God became one of us! The God-man never traveled a hundred miles from where He was born. He only had one earthly possession—His clothes. After He embarked on His earthly ministry, do you ever remember Him having a house on which He paid monthly payments? What was His concern and with what was He absorbed? Herein is the secret of living on earth. Where else did we ever think we would find it except in and through Him? The noise of the marketplaces crowd out our peace of mind as we rent storage houses to take care of the overflow of things we collected and we can't remember why. Jesus wants us to observe the way God clothes the grass and feeds the birds and reminds us we are infinitely more valuable to Him than the birds.

These words of Jesus are not just for memorizing, but also for living. Pray God we learn to really live.