

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, January 6, 2019

Take Joyfully the Spoiling of Your Goods

In the first 31 verses of Hebrews chapter 10, we find a provocation to hold fast the profession of our faith in Christ, without wavering, and to patiently continue in love and good works – daily considering and encouraging our co-elect - despite the rigors and trials of our Christian pilgrimage. It won't matter how we began this race, if we don't finish it in faith. What good is the blood of Christ to us, if we return to the world, thereby trampling under foot the Son of God; counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; and despising and grieving the Spirit of grace? Paul concludes his exhortation like this:

Hebrews 10:32-39 “32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and **took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.** 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Hebrews 10 is exploding with hearty instruction for us; today I want to focus specifically on the idea that we must take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. In our passage, the “spoiling of your goods” that the Apostle references has specifically to do with the persecution that these people of faith suffered at the hands of ungodly men as a direct result of their profession of faith. They clearly suffered intensive satanic assault in the time directly following their conversion. Beloved friends, we are familiar with these things. We have had our property destroyed, our freedom taken away (in various forms), our bodies beaten, our jobs interfered with and stolen, our reputations slandered, etc. Notice also that we are all partakers together – when one is afflicted, we are all afflicted; when one is grieved, we are all grieved; when God is correcting and exercising one of us, we are all being corrected and exercised. If it is not so, then we are not God's! It is a hallmark of the wicked that they drown themselves in worldly pleasure and “are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph” (**Amos 6:3-6**) Beloved, we are familiar with these assaults, and are promised that we WILL have trials like this to endure:

- **Philippians 1:27-29** “27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

Today, I want us to consider a broader perspective, when it comes to taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods. Yes, they are spoiled at times by the hand of those that hate us – but - even without some particular assault, ALL of our goods (including our lives) are rapidly moving toward corruption - spoiling. Each of us is in the process of returning to dust. It is promised to us – owed to us – as a part of the curse: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” (**Genesis 3:19**) Beloved, we must frame our hearts toward God, such that we are able EACH DAY to take joyfully the spoiling of our “goods”.

In order to take joyfully the “spoiling of our goods”, we first need to understand the nature of them:

- They are God’s
- They are His to reclaim at His pleasure, and when He deems best
- They are owed back to him with interest
- They are rapidly decaying

We have all kinds of “goods” in this life – resources that the Lord has given to us. We can consume them purely for our own gratification, or we can be good stewards of them, employing them according to our Master’s interests. Here are a few examples of our “goods”:

- Food
- Houses
- Clothing
- Cars
- Jobs
- Money
- Technology
- Mental and physical gifts
- Bodies / health
- Reputation

- Friends
- Children / Family
- Time
- Our life

All of these resources flow freely, and directly from the hand of God - we have not earned them, and we never can earn them. These resources belong to God, as the Creator of them(**Colossians 1:16**); furthermore, they belong to God as our Redeemer – he has purchased us for himself, and He owns us – all that we are and all that we have:

- **1Corinthians 6:19,20** “19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

We are stewards of these resources - they are lent to us for a short season, and we owe them back to God **with interest**.

- **Romans 12:1** “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”
- **Luke 19:11-27** “11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

- Our gracious Lord has made us stewards of these resources, but to what end? We’re supposed to be employing them and gaining interest, but how? Here’s how: Preach Christ to this dying world, thereby preparing the way of the Lord and His Kingdom. That’s our primary function in this life, and should be our primary focus! That’s not to say that we are emotionless robots that move mechanically through this life with no enjoyment of God’s created world. Indeed, the Lord has given each of us a portion to enjoy in this life – and we can enjoy it, with contentment and thanksgiving for the portion that He has allotted to each of us - but it’s not the main event. (**Ecclesiastes 9:9**) The activity of our lives should be pointing to, and enabling, the work of the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If it’s not, then we are headed for trouble! If it’s not, then we are returning to the world! If it’s not, then we are drawing back unto perdition!

Our worldly goods will ALL fail, without exception. Seeing that fact, when we go to put our hand to employing our resources, we must keep our eyes and heart fixed upon heaven. Consider the scripture:

- **Matthew 6:19-24** “19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
 - As a direct result of sin, we live in a decaying, and dying world. Food will spoil, houses will rot, clothing will wear out, cars will break down, mental capacity will diminish, bodies will decay, reputations will be ruined, friends will abandon, family will become enemies, time will slip quickly through the hour glass, and ultimately, our lives will be taken from us. Simply put: all flesh is grass! If our hope is wrapped up in the creation - and our short pilgrimage in it - then we are sunk! We don’t sorrow as those around us, who have no hope (**1Thessalonians 4:13**); rather, when we have sorrow and grief, it is tempered and eased, because we have a lively hope! (**1Peter 1:3**) Our hope is bound up with our Savior in the bundle of life – He has promised, purchased, and prepared an incorruptible habitation for us.

- **Luke 12:16-21** “16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Let's consider one more of Christ's parables:

- **Luke 16:1-13** “1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.”
 - We are all just as guilty before our heavenly Master, as this unfaithful steward was before his earthly one. As a result, we only have the stewardship of our earthly goods for a short while, and then we will be called to give account. *Henry: “we must all of us shortly be discharged from our stewardship in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and dismiss us from our stewardship, will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places and have the same.”*
- “3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.”
 - He is about to lose all of his substance and livelihood – what shall he do? Indeed – seeing that our stewardship will shortly come to an end, what shall we do? Clearly the answer will not come from the work of our own hands – we can't be saved by our own righteousness – see how the sloth and pride of the flesh immediately turn this man aside?
- “4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.”
 - Here is the answer – I cannot save myself, so I must look to another; I must have a friend to save me! If I would declare that I have a friend, then I must show myself friendly: for the short time that the sun is still shining on my stewardship, I must employ my resources in a way that is pleasing to my friend, so that he will receive me when I am discharged from my stewardship.

- “5 So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”
 - In a worldly, logistical sense, the people of this world prepare for things in rather amazing ways. Think about the incredible lengths that people go to in order to feather their own nests and prepare for retirement; think about how they prepare for, avoid, and mitigate disasters. When the people of this world set their sights on such things, they will trample anyone in their path – consider the way that this unjust steward prepares for his own soft landing: he makes friends by defrauding his master! The Lord isn’t commending him for his fraudulent behavior. The commendation – and therefore the instruction for us – is that he wisely saw the danger ahead of him, and used his resources to prepare for it. It is a shameful thought that the earth dwellers are more industrious at pleasing men and laying up treasure in the world than we are at employing our resources to make heavenly friends.
- “9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”
 - What is meant by the “mammon of unrighteousness”? Mammon simply means riches, treasure - these are the same earthly “goods” and resources that we have been discussing today. Why are they called unrighteous?
 - The goods of this world are deceitful. They hold allure and promise for our fleshly hearts, and yet they have no lasting substance. They are spoiling as we speak, and are therefore not to be relied upon.
 - **1Timothy 6:17-19** “17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”
 - Our resources are not evil within themselves, and yet “when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Romans 7:21). In our best moment, sin is present with us. When we go to do a good work, there is always

an element of pride, or covetousness, or lust, or envy, or some other sinful driver that infects our efforts.

- We are to employ our mammon – for the short while that we have it – in order to make friends in heavenly places – with God and the angels. My friends, we will fail! Our resources will fail; our lives will fail. When we fail – when our stewardship is terminated – we want to be received by our friends in heaven.
- **“10** He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. **11** If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? **12** And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own? **13** No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”
 - Clearly then, we are to invest our mammon in the service of God – walking honestly, caring for our families, preaching the Gospel to our neighbors, and ministering to the Saints. That is the face of serving God WITH our mammon. However, remember that the mammon of unrighteousness is deceitful, and we must be always watchful, prayerful, and suspicious of our own hearts, lest we slip from serving God with mammon into serving mammon for the sake of mammon.

Seeing then the nature of our goods, we can frame our hearts before God, to patiently and joyfully endure their spoiling, because:

- Our goods belong to God, they are appointed precisely according to His providence, and they are only loaned to us for a short season. There is no accident or coincidence related to their arrival or their departure.
 - **Job 1:21** “... Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”
- The exercise appointed by the spoiling of our goods does a work in our own heart, as well as the hearts of our co-elect. That exercise, and the fruit that it produces, is a precious thing to our God.
 - **2Corinthians 4:17** “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”
 - **Luke 18:29-30** “**29** And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, **30** Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

- The way that we patiently and joyfully endure the spoiling of our goods is a part of our testimony for Christ.
- We know that God has blessed us in our lives in endless ways, and every bit of it is more than we deserve.
 - **Luke 16:25** “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”
- This earth is not our long home – we are pilgrims here. We have a loose grip on the things of this world, ready to let it all go at the bidding of our Lord, knowing that we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance! What joy!

I will leave you with a series of quotes from a sermon that Charles Spurgeon preached in 1860, just days after 200 people died in a mining explosion. Spurgeon’s sermon is all about death - while death is not the particular topic of our discussion today, it represents the ultimate spoiling of our goods. When our eternal enemy slithered into the Garden of Eden with jealousy and hatred in his proud heart, and deception on his lips, he began the process of spoiling the life of every human. Our own life is the most valuable resource that we have, and therefore it is 1) a useful exemplar of all lesser resources, and 2) most difficult for us to joyfully consider its demise. I hope that his words are as helpful to you as they are to me.

Spurgeon sermon: “The Wailing of Risca”

“And first, let us learn to set loose our dearest friends that we have on earth. Let us love them – love them we may, love them we should – but let us always learn to love them as dying things! O, build not your nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe! ‘Set not your affections on things on earth,’ for the things of earth WILL leave you, and then what will you do when your joy is emptied, and the golden bowl which held your mirth shall be dashed to pieces? Love first and foremost, Christ; and when you love others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying – love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold your friend that you shall not wonder when he vanishes from you; so view the partakers of your life that you will not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See you the disease of mortality on every cheek, and write not eternal upon the creature of an hour.”

“Take care that you put all your dear ones into God’s hands. You have put your soul there, put them there. You can trust Him for temporals for yourself, trust your jewels with Him. Feel that they are not your own, but that they are God’s loans to you. Loans which may be recalled at any moment: precious gifts of Heaven of which you are but a tenant at will. Your possessions are never as safe as when you are willing to give them up, and you are

never as rich as when you put all you have into the hands of God. You shall find it greatly mitigates the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender each day all things that are dearest to you, into the keeping of your gracious God."

"Spiders webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life. Let us all look upon ourselves as dying men; let us not reckon on tomorrow! Today is your only time, O mortal men; the present moment is the only moment you may call your own, and oh how swift its wings! This hour is yours – yesterday is gone – tomorrow is with God and may never come! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

"Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race; let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a seashore! That hourglass yonder contains all the sands of your life. Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass, and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passages of its days."

"Oh, live as though you meant to die! Live as though you knew you might die tomorrow! But live while you live. Oh, what a work we have to do, and how short the time to do it in! My soul, shall you ever condemn yourself in your dying moments for having preached too often, or too earnestly? No, never! You may rebuke your sloth – but you can never bemoan your excessive industry!"

"Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ's service as much time as we give many of our trifling amusements? Why, we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability – who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else – but as Christians they have nothing to do! They can be energetic in parish vestries, or in the rifle corps, but in the church, they give their name, but their energies are dormant."

"Live while you live! While it is called today, work, for the night comes wherein no man can work."

"You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come! You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you! But if you would dread to die in any spot, then do not go there. If you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such – and – such a word upon your lips, utter not that word. Or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the judgment day, seek not to think that thought! So act that you may feel that you can

take your shroud with you wherever you go. Happy is he who dies in his pulpit! Blessed is the man who dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him, serving his master. But, Oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder, and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched when God shall appear in judgment!"

"God help us so to live in the expectation of death, that Christ may be glorified in us, whether we sleep or wake, and that we may be able to say, 'for me to live is Christ, to die is gain.'"

I love you all. Amen.