

The Fair Havens



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Confidence in God

As the world faces its greatest economic upheaval since the Great Depression, many in the Western world have experienced a significant decline in their net worth and life style. Mounting uncertainty has been replaced by outright fear as men's hearts fail them, not knowing what is coming upon the earth. As believers, we would do well to pause and ask ourselves if we have placed our confidence in our financial safety net rather than our Heavenly Father and His Son. When Israel was warned of the dangers of wealth, one of the principal reasons was the possibility that in their prosperity they would forget the Lord (Deut. 8:7-18).

Some erroneously look to what is termed 'prosperity theology' or the 'gospel of health and wealth'—supposing that there is a direct relationship between righteousness and prosperity on the one hand and sin and adversity on the other. Though Israel, on a national level, was promised that they would be rewarded for their obedience, with children, crops, livestock and victory over their enemies, (Deut. 28: 1-13) this was not to be construed as a guarantee on the personal level. Such thinking fails to appreciate the value of hardship and adversity in the growth of a saint.

Indeed, often it appeared that the opposite was true. The psalmist declared, "I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil" (Psa. 37:35). And Jeremiah posed the question, "You are also righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" (Jeremiah 12:1).

Job's 'friends' erroneously concluded that there was a direct cause and effect relationship between one's behaviour and ensuing blessing or adversity in this life. Since Job had succumbed to sickness and poverty, they concluded that he

must have had hidden sins, — despite the fact that God had acknowledged him as 'a perfect and upright man' (Job 1:8). What these friends failed to realize was that the divine time frame to set all things right was not to be limited by human expectations (Luke 6:20-25).

Jesus speaking of God's blessings said of his Father, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt. 5:45). Such gifts are extended to everyone, irrespective of their morality. What we call prosperity, is often incidental. An evil person may have rich soil and a good crop, while a faithful person may have poor soil and a meager harvest.

Scripture instructs us that not only may the righteous suffer despite their righteousness, but also that the righteous may suffer because of their righteousness. 'Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (2 Tim. 3:12). Indeed, the materialistic age in which we live doesn't look favourably on a true disciple of Christ. (John 15:18-20).

Jesus' disciples acknowledged that they had left everything behind to follow him. Jesus in turn replied, "I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life' (Mark 10:29-30).

Was the Lord literally promising his disciples homes galore and a hundred fields? If Jesus literally meant that they would be materially blessed to such an extent, are we to also conclude that they would have scores of children and multiple parents? Obviously this was not the lesson the Lord was teaching. Rather, Christ was saying that those who would

follow him, and leave behind what was theirs would become part of the larger family of faith, where relationships are deep and hospitality and resources are readily shared. As part of the body of Christ, we too can testify to the loving fellowship of our brothers and sisters, the guidance at the hands of spiritual parents, and the blessing of nurturing God's children. We all have been recipients of the kindness and sharing that characterizes the Household of God.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *ploutos* is used six times to describe material riches, but the same word is used eleven times to refer to spiritual riches. Once we experience those riches, and find them so profoundly satisfying,

we can never again elevate material riches to the place of importance they might once have held.

When the Jews witnessed the generosity of the early church in Jerusalem, they saw how they loved one another and cared for each other. As a result, Luke recorded that 'they enjoyed the favour of all the people'. There was something quite appealing in this selflessness compared to the self-centered materialism that characterized Jerusalem's religious elite. The power of this example and the new way of life it encouraged resulted in the Lord adding 'to their number daily those who were being saved' (Acts 2:45-47).

Materialism

Materialism was a constant temptation throughout the history of God's people. Achan took the things dedicated to God in Jericho and his covetousness brought death to him and his family. The prophet Baalam agreed to undermine Israel in return for the king of Moab's money. Solomon disobeyed the law in his desire to accumulate large quantities of gold, silver and horses (Deut. 17:16-17). To lay up a nest egg, Gehazi lied to both Naaman and Elisha and in turn brought leprosy upon him and his house. In the supreme act of betrayal, Judas betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. At the establishment of the Jerusalem ecclesia, Ananias and Sapphira withheld money from the sale of their property and were both struck dead.

Jesus was aware of the strong allure that materialism can cast upon a believer. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:13). Not only was Jesus warning us against possessiveness—being selfish with what we already own, but also with covetousness—lusting after what God hasn't given us.

Greed needs to be recognized for the dangerous evil that it is. Just as Jesus said that one who lusts is an adulterer (Matt: 5:28), and the Apostle John declared that one who hates is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15), so the Apostle Paul taught that one who is greedy is an idolater (Col. 3:5). Greed is, at its essence, the worshipping of money. Yet, God declared on Mount Sinai that his people "should have no other gods before Me". Furthermore the eighth commandment prohibiting stealing and the tenth against covetousness spoke to the importance the Almighty placed against the love of 'things'.

The dangers of materialism are manifold. Jesus appreciated that his followers could not serve two masters. Both demand unfeigned loyalty, yet only One offers life, while the other brings anxiety, discontent and death.

1. Materialism chokes our spiritual life.

Jesus warned the brethren in Laodicea that they were blinded to their true condition. They were desperately poor in the things of God having been impaired by their material wealth. Materialism is a fruitless attempt to find meaning apart from God. True fulfillment cannot be realized without the Father and the Son. Jeremiah appreciated the tragedy of a life apart from the Almighty, recognizing that such misplaced trust was idolatry.

"Has a nation ever changed gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glory for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the Lord. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2: 11-13).

Imagine people dying from thirst and digging cisterns that simply can't retain moisture. In a desperate attempt to satiate their thirst, they shovel stones and sand from the broken cistern into their mouths, choking and gagging in the process. All the while a refreshing spring gurgles within ear-shot. This is the picture drawn by God. Placing faith in anything but Him is not only empty, it is also self-destructive.

2. Materialism prevents us from seeing the dangers of wealth.

Ezekiel wrote, "By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud." (Ezek. 28:4-5). When we pat ourselves on the back for our acumen to gain wealth, we fail to see what in reality are God's gifts and acknowledge the true Giver. Hosea (13:6) wrote of God, "When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me".

The Scriptures warn us that the possession of riches is almost always a spiritual challenge—if not an outright liability. Jesus said, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (Matt. 19:23-24). It would be easier for a camel to navigate the ‘needle’s eye’ than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Should we then view riches as a blessing from God?

When Israel was in the wilderness, God sent quail as a loving provision for His children. But after their constant murmuring, He said that He would send quail again ‘until it comes out your nostrils and you loathe it’ (Num. 11:18-20). Material prosperity can be a blessing from God, provided that it does not become a substitute for Him. If it becomes a substitute, it becomes a curse.

3. Materialism can be the source of anxiety and unhappiness.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis wrote of young Edmund who sampled the Witch’s Turkish Delight and then sacrificed his integrity to get more of it—only to realize that the more he gorged himself, the sicker and less satisfied he became. Similarly, the accumulation of wealth can prove just as addicting and empty.

Often great wealth leaves in its wake broken families and broken lives. Howard Hughes with all his money and power ended life miserable and crazed. John D. Rockefeller lamented, “I have made many millions but they have brought me no happiness”. John Jacob Astor, the first multimillionaire in the US declared, “I am the most miserable man on earth”.

Materialism is the mother of anxiety. In Matthew 6, Jesus’ discourse on material and spiritual treasure is followed by his admonition not to worry about material things. One motivator in accumulating wealth is fear or worry. Yet putting trust in earthly treasures simply multiplies that anxiety because such treasures are temporary and uncertain. A life focused on the stock market or real estate will be a life of perpetual insecurity.

Paul exhorted the brethren not to “put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but...in God, who richly provides” (1 Tim. 6:17). Solomon saw to the heart of the matter. “The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep” (Eccl. 5:12).

4. Materialism ends in futility.

Solomon, by worldly standards, achieved the ultimate in material success. “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure” (Eccl. 2:10). The more Solomon had, the more he was tempted to indulge. His indulgence led to sin and subsequent misery. In the final analysis he declared, “When I surveyed all that my hands

had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (Eccl. 2:11).

Solomon had opportunity to fulfill his every desire. Most people chase their desires with money, but they run out of money before their desires are met. Consequently they believe the lie that ‘if only I had more money, I’d be happy’. But Solomon had it all. He fulfilled his every desire and realized the emptiness and futility of it all.

5. Materialism obscures the best things in life—especially the hope of the Gospel.

God, through the prophet Isaiah invited everyone to ‘Come, all of you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost’ (55:1) This invitation is also repeated in the final chapter of Scripture, “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev. 22:17). The only thing worth buying cannot be bought with money.

In Proverbs, Solomon observed that ‘Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath’ (11:4) and the prophet Ezekiel added, ‘They shall cast their silver in the streets...and their gold shall not be able to deliver them. (7:19). Only righteousness will deliver a man in the day of judgement – and that not his own righteousness but rather a righteousness imputed by faith upon him who sought to serve the Master and not Mammon.

6. Materialism creates a sense of self-sufficiency independent of God.

Why place your trust in God, when you’ve got your own resources to backstop the challenges of life? Why turn to God in prayer when every thing is under control? Material abundance insulates us from life’s hardships and in turn, it can blind us to appreciating that every breath we take is a gift from God. Prosperity can prevent us from discerning the true depth of our need. Preoccupation with temporal things leaves little desire or appreciation of things eternal. Yet materialism remains a poor substitute for addressing true need. Paul realized that it was out of weakness that he in turn was made strong.

7. Materialism leads to pride and elevated self worth.

All too often growing prosperity leads to the erroneous view that we deserve the credit for what we have. This leads to pride and a failure to acknowledge that all gifts come from God.

Paul pointedly asks the brethren in Corinth, ‘For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?’ (1 Cor. 4:7). Paul also

instructed Timothy, 'Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant' (I Tim. 6:17).

Prosperity can lead to favouritism and preferential treatment. This was what James warned the brethren of. 'Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet" have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?' (James 2:2-4).

8. Materialism promotes injustice and exploitation.

James also warned of the mistreatment of the poor at the hands of the wealthy who would exploit them for their own ends. 'Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence.' (James 5:4-5)

This was nothing new. Israel of old was also prone to unjustly treat the poor for their own advantage. 'You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them' (Amos 5:11). 'They have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor' (Jeremiah 5:27-28). It is not that the wealthy man is more inherently sinful than the poor man, but rather he simply has greater opportunity to impose his will for his own benefit.

9. Materialism can distract us from our central purpose.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of some seed that 'fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants' (Matt. 13:7). Jesus went on to elaborate that these represent people who hear the word of God but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke out their spiritual lives rendering them unfruitful. Note the association that the Master makes between wealth and worry.

Paul used the analogy of a soldier who avoided encumbrances in civilian affairs in order to please his commander (2 Tim. 2:4). Similarly, we live to please the Captain of our salvation. We too recognize that becoming entangled in peripheral matters is bound to compromise the time and resources that need to be wholly devoted to our Lord's service. It is not that the civilian affairs described by Paul were inherently wrong, but rather they were an unwanted source of preoccupation.

This lesson is brought home in the parable of the great banquet. The three invited guests all turned down their invitations. One had to attend to his field, another his oxen and the third his wife. The master was angered by these excuses and consequently invitations were extended to those who valued the offer. But the men who were preoccupied with their new treasures, Jesus said, 'I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet' (Luke 14:24).

Could we fail with the same lack of perspective? Is there a seemingly good, legitimate and compelling reason that we too are saying no to God? Are we so encumbered that we will miss the banquet?

Sourced from: Alcorn, Randy C. *Money Possessions and Eternity*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, Inc., 2003.

Think On These Things: *Idolatry*

Biblical Browsings for Believers, Len Richardson, 1966

The first two commandments of the Decalogue (or "ten commandments") related to the attitude of the people of Israel towards their God. "*I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath...thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them..."

It was in the breach of these two fundamental commandments that generation after generation of Israelites went astray, and the guilt of idolatry was graven with a pen of iron on the conscience of the nation. Time after time the Lord sent His prophets, '*rising up early and sending them*,' to call them away from these dumb idols, yet they would not

hearken. '*Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abomination of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled against me... neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt*' (Ezek. 20:7-8).

It may seem a far cry from the days of these stern prophets to our times, and the 'idols of Egypt' may sound very remote to our ears. Yet such is not a true estimate of the case. It was to Christian believers that Paul was writing when he addressed the Corinthians in this way:

'Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them...wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall...' (1 Cor. 10:7-12).

And it was Christian believers that John, the beloved disciple, exhorted to keep themselves from idols (1 Jn. 5:21). If we imagine ourselves immune from the danger of idolatry

it is because we have not begun to perceive its significance.

What, after all, was the *essence* of the idol worship to which Israel so often succumbed? Surely it was simply putting other things in place of God. So God expresses it through Jeremiah (2:11): *'Hath a nation changed their glory for that which doth not profit...they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water'*. They put their trust in chariots and horses, and their hearts were centred on human schemes of self-glory and they scraped the gold from off the temple doors to buy off the invader, but forgot God their Maker, and left Him out of their calculations. The accusation of the prophet Hosea (2:8) was that the abundant provision of corn, and wine, and oil which God gave, and which should have been returned to Him in thankful service, they prostituted to the worship of Baal.

Can we begin to see that anything which is worshipped and served other than God is thus an 'idol'? It need not be a material thing—gods of wood and stone graven by art and man's device are but the crudest forms of idolatry. And men who would scorn to bow the knee to totems and images may, and frequently do, follow with all their powers, the pursuit of ambitions and fantasies which deprive God of His place in their lives. The temptation which assailed Jesus in the wilderness, to make all the world his own by the worship of sin, was of this nature, and was repulsed by the firm statement of the eternal principle, *'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve'*. If he had sought the power of the Kingdom by the means of the flesh he would have been guilty of idolatry.

We see that idolatry is an attitude of the mind and not a posture of the body. *'These men'* said the Lord to Ezekiel *'have set up their idols in their hearts'*. Anybody may do this—it is the easiest, as well as the most subtle form of idol worship. Its danger lies in the fact that it is not seen by others. Too often it is not recognized by oneself. Who can tell what idols are erected in his neighbour's heart?

*Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with Thee my heart to share?
Ah, tear it thence and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there.*

In this hymn we recognize the possibility that we may have, perhaps without realizing it, set up strange gods in our hearts—things that occupy our heart to the exclusion of God. We remember that Paul twice condemns all covetousness because it has just this effect, and he brands it as idolatry (Col. 3:6). So the field begins to open out.

Men make many idols today. In general it is true to say that 'God is not in all their thoughts'. Instead they 'set up idols in their heart' and they call them 'Business' or 'Pleasure', and they set up little ambitions and bend their whole

will to the realization of them. They worship the god of 'Mammon' and honour 'Power' with the best of their intellect and seek it with their whole heart—'and the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways' they do not glorify. Such are the trends of modern idolatry, and these influences are perhaps harder to resist than the opposition and persecution of bygone generations, which have always tended to strengthen the moral fibre of the saints. The fires of persecution, if men are able to endure them, build up the resistance of any movement. But such careless, pleasurable forms of idolatry as we find all around us today can be so insidious in their working and sap away our spiritual life.

These are the influences against which Jesus warned his disciples continually, but especially those who should live in the last days. We have the picture of men and women eating and drinking, marrying, buying and selling, and quite oblivious of the coming judgement. Not that any of these occupations are wrong in themselves, but the error lies in seeking after such things as an end in themselves. They become objects of worship and demand the whole time and energy and enthusiasm of their thoughtless devotees. Domestic happiness is a good thing but it must not become the only thing, or even the greatest thing in life. The earning of our daily bread is a necessary part of life, but must not be allowed to obscure the more important *'labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life'*. A motorcar may be convenient, or a larger house desirable, but these must not become little gods which we set up in our hearts. Christ himself in the same chapter in which he foretells of these perilous times for faith points out the folly of it all. *'Who-soever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life shall save it'*.

Life invested in this present world may seem to pay a good dividend, but the end of these things is death. The gods of this world may appear to reward their worshippers with substantial benefits, but in a little while the fever is over and the folly is manifest. 'For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul (and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself) he shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light' (Psa. 49: 17-19).

Life devoted to the service of God, on the other hand, may appear to be restricted. It may seem to be losing so many of the good things in life—but it will be abundantly justified in the end. 'For the end of these things is life and peace'.

The reforming zeal of King Hezekiah destroyed the idols out of the land. *'He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan'* or

'a piece of brass' (2Kings 18:4). He said in effect, 'this idol which you adore, and before which you offer your incense, is nothing at all—just a piece of brass! How foolish to worship such trumpery things'. And so are all the gods which men so eagerly run after today—pieces of brass, sticks of wood and plaster, dust and ashes, which cannot help in trouble or save from death.

Only God can do this. And He has promised that He will do it for us, if only we will trust in Him, believe His word and love him with all our heart and with all our soul, and with all our mind and with all our strength. Remembering always the love of Jesus His son, who dismissed all the demands of worldly ambition and self service with the simple words which expressed the principle of his life: *'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve'*.

Year End Financial Report

Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the Year Ending March 31, 2008

Revenue

Investment income	17,429
Donations	500
Grants returned	0
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	17,929

Expenses

Grants	24,600
Professional fees	2,491
Administrative	2,211
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	29,302

Net Income (Loss) (11,373)

Opening fund balance 436,101

Closing fund balance 424,728

The Foundation is appreciative of ecclesial and individual gifts to support the work of the Lord. Donations may be sent to Bro. Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Pk. Dr., N. Saanich, BC. V8L 4V7

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation
c/o 728 Church Street
Toronto, ON, M4W 2M6

Directors
Bro. Brent Curry
Bro. Clive Daniel, Treasurer
Bro. Alan Ghent, Chair

Sis. Penny Keeting, Secretary
Sis. Marie Klien
Bro. Ian McPhee
Bro. Tom Thorp

Foundation's Terms of Reference

How can the Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation be of assistance to your ecclesia? Are there health and welfare needs in your meeting that require attention, but ecclesial resources are strained or insufficient? The Foundation, operating under the applicable government regulations, may provide grants only to registered charities in Canada. We must disperse a percentage of our investment income each year, based upon a government regulatory formula.

Ecclesias in Canada may request assistance from the Foundation by following these guidelines:

- Only requests from Arranging Boards will be considered. An individual member of an ecclesia may not make a personal request to the Foundation.
- Priority is to be given to the welfare needs of Christadelphian elderly, since this reflects the original purpose of Fairhaven House. If additional funds are available after meeting these needs, then more general health and welfare needs of the Christadelphian community will be considered, followed by health and welfare needs of the community at large.
- Requests must be in writing and should document in confidence the need, the background, the amount of help required and the amount of help being provided by the ecclesia.
- It is expected that the ecclesia requesting support will also provide funds (preferably 50%) to assist from its own resources. It is preferable, if possible, that ecclesias address emergency situations, and subsequently follow up with a request to the Foundation. The Board of the Foundation considers requests at its semi-annual meetings in March and August each year. Emergency requests will also be addressed as quickly as possible.

Requests may be sent to:

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Foundation
c/o Sister Penny Keeting, Secretary
728 Church Street Toronto, ON M4W 2M6

It is important to appreciate that the primary responsibility to meet the welfare needs of our brothers, sisters and young people lies at the ecclesial level, and consequently the Foundation's role is to supplement rather than supplant this ecclesial responsibility. We encourage ecclesias to be actively aware of situations where there is a need, extend help, and then approach the Foundation as a funding partner.