

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

That Ye May Prosper

Scenario:

You are talking with an individual who is interested in studying the Scriptures. This person knows you are a follower of Christ. This person has been listening to an audio reading of the Bible. You and this person are discussing what Jesus said in Luke 9:57-62. You are telling them that following Christ is about setting your affections on things above, not on the things of the earth (Colossians 3:1-4).

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

This person states that: “God says if you keep His words you will have prosperity in all that you do. Furthermore, if you do not turn from those words to the right or to the left, you will have prosperity no matter where you go. When you say that you are supposed to set your affection on things above instead of on things here, you are contradicting what God says.” (This person cannot find the Scriptures he or she is referencing, but knows they are in the word of God.)

A Later Statement Is Made:

“I do not believe in your God of poverty and suffering. I believe God wants me to be wealthy and live like a ruler. I will not ignore the happiness that God wants me to have.”

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- This starts off looking great. Someone interested in the studying the Scriptures is exciting. However, a good start doesn't always mean someone will be receptive to the whole truth (**Acts 13:13-51, Acts 17:1-34, Acts 18:1-6, and Acts 18:11-17**).
- The fact that this person knows you are a follower of Christ, might (only leaving this as a “might” because more detail is not given as to why) indicate you are living the life of a child of God as you should (**Matthew 5:14-16, Philippians 2:14-16, and I Peter 2:5-4:19**).
- In the context of this study, seeking things above rather than on things of this earth is certainly a point of truth (**Isaiah 55:6-9, Luke 12:31, Luke 13:23-24, John 6:1-27, Romans 2:7, I Corinthians 9:24-27, II Corinthians 4:8-5:10, Hebrews 11:6, and Hebrews 13:14**).
- One should understand what he or she is committing to prior to obeying the Gospel (**Luke 14:25-33**).
- Set your affection [thinking; what you savor; what you regard; what you care about] on things above (**Psalms 119:166, Psalms 119:174, Lamentations 3:26, John 14:1-3, II Corinthians 5:14-17, Philippians 3:4-20, I Thessalonians 5:8, Hebrews 11:8-16, I Peter 1:1-16, and II Peter 3:10-14**).
- Do not have your affections on earthly things (**Matthew 6:19-34, Romans 8:1-11, Romans 12:1-3, I Timothy 6:6-19, and II Timothy 2:1-4**).

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- Fleshly desires are not profitable to us (**John 6:63**, **Galatians 5:16-17**, **James 1:13-16**, and **I Peter 2:5-11**).
- When this person says that if you keep God's words you will prosper in all that you do, there are Old Testament passages that state such (**Deuteronomy 29:9**, **Joshua 1:7**, **I Kings 2:3**, **Psalms 1:1-3**, etc.). If one were to honestly read the contexts, they would understand how those things don't apply to anyone today. Furthermore, the word translated "prosper" in the aforementioned passages doesn't come close to meaning wealthy. Look it up (Strong's # 6743).
- Those promises to the children of Israel in the Old Testament were physical (**Deuteronomy 7:1-26** and **Deuteronomy 30:1-20**).
- While there are many things to learn by studying things written in the "Old Testament" (**Romans 15:4** and **I Corinthians 10:1-13**), we are not living under the Law of Moses today (**Romans 7:1-6**, **Ephesians 2:11-17**, **Colossians 2:6-14**, and **Hebrews 9:15-10:22**).
- Today, God's people are not Old Testament Israel and our promises are not earthly/ physical (**Romans 8:24-25** [**Titus 1:2**], **Ephesians 1:3**, **Titus 2:11-14**, **I Peter 1:3-12**, and **I John 2:15-17**).
- For a clear example of the difference in the teaching of old and those of Christ, consider Jesus addressing earthly wealth in two separate contexts (**Matthew 19:16-30** and **Luke 12:13-21**).
- Faithfulness in Christ is more likely to produce physical hardship than it is to produce worldly success and comfort (**Matthew 5:10-12**, **John 16:33**, **Acts 14:22**, and **II Timothy 3:10-12**).
- In the later statement, there are several extremely ignorant comments made. First, "live like a ruler"??? Read [as referenced in the point above, but here from another account]: **Luke 18:18-30**
- The idea that God wants anyone to be wealthy is also contrary to a real study of the will of God (**Proverbs 23:4-5**, **Luke 6:20**, **Luke 16:19-31**, and **James 2:5**).
- This person has listened to the reading of Scriptures. They have not studied them in context. The promises and to whom they were made is significant. Twisting Scriptures does not save anyone (**II Peter 3:15-18**).
- In conclusion, God does not want anyone seeking to be saved to look for joy from things of this world. If one does, that desire will choke the word of God: "*And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful*" (**Mark 4:18-19**).