

Pleasure, Possessions, and Power

Presented to the

Old Union Baptist Ministers' School

March 26, 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

Mat 22:34 *But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*

Mat 22:35 *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,*

Mat 22:36 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

Mat 22:37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

Mat 22:38 *This is the first and great commandment.*

Mat 22:39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Mat 22:40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

In the garden Adam and Eve had a single requirement, not to partake of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve, because of their holy nature, loved God and glorified Him by their obedience to Him (Jhn 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments*).

But, they had an adversary—Lucifer, an angel that had fallen from heaven.

The Return of the Seventy

Luk 10:17 *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

Luk 10:18 *And he said unto them, **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.***

Luk 10:19 *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

Luk 10:20 *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

John Gill commented on Luke 10:18

I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven; meaning, that this was no news to him, nor any surprising event, that devils should be cast out of men, and be in a state of subjection; for as he existed as the eternal Son of God before his incarnation, he was present, and saw him and his angels fall from heaven, from their first estate, their habitation of bliss and glory, down to hell, upon their sin and rebellion, as violently, swiftly, and suddenly, as the lightning falls from heaven to earth; and when he sent out these his disciples, as soon as they began their work, and all along in it, he, by his divine omniscience, saw the powers of darkness falling before their ministry and miracles; and he also foresaw how Satan hereafter, in a more conspicuous manner, would fall before the preaching of his Gospel by his apostles, not only in Judea, but especially

among the Gentiles, where he, the prince of this world, would be cast down from his throne, and out of his kingdom; so that what they related, as it was what he knew before, it was but little in comparison of what he himself had seen long ago, and of what he foresaw would be; and even he would give them power to do other miraculous works besides these.

Isa 14:12 ***How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!***

Isa 14:13 *For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:*

Isa 14:14 *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*

Isa 14:15 *Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*

How art thou fallen from heaven,.... This is not to be understood of the fall of Satan, and the apostate angels from their first estate, when they were cast down from heaven to hell, though there may be an allusion to it; but the words are a continuation of a message to the king of Babylon. (John Gill).

Job 38:4 *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.*

Job 38:5 *Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?*

Job 38:6 *Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;*

Job 38:7 ***When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?***

The morning stars and sons of God refer to the angels that sang and shouted for joy together before the separation caused by sin.

Job 38:4, 7 seem to indicate that the angels were created before the physical creation to include man.

Satan's fall must have occurred sometime after the angels were created and before he tempted Adam and Eve. When Lucifer sinned he was cast out of heaven to a place God created for him and his demons. Satan and his demons will glorify God through their eternal destruction. But God gave Satan access to man that God had created in His own image—a man capable of experiencing pleasure, possessions, and power

That, of course, is illustrated in the Garden of Eden. An indication of the relationship and interaction among God, Satan, and man is illustrated in the book of Job:

Satan Allowed to Test Job

Job 1:6 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Job 1:7 *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Satan certainly could not defeat an omnipotent God, so, His object of attack was the man that God created in His own image and loved so much. Satan was eventually and eternally defeated by the Son of Man.

After Adam and Eve sinned they were not able to love God. They were spiritually dead—dead men cannot do anything. But, Jesus taught about a new birth:

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Jesus promised that those who believed on him would have eternal life, that being sealed by the Spirit of God. Those new born souls will never die. And, they do, and always will, by their perfect, holy nature love God—as required by the law.

They had stoney hearts with which they could not feel. The following scripture refers to national Israel, but can be applied to Christians.

Eze 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

As mentioned above, the new soul is sealed by the Holy Spirit, and therefore, it cannot sin, but scripture warns about guarding the heart.

Pro 4:23 *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Jer 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

The Psalmist asked God's help in keeping his heart.

Psa 139:23 *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*

Psa 139:24 *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Def. Heart: the seat of the affections.

II. MAN IS HARD-WIRED FOR PLEASURE, POSSESSIONS, AND POWER

A scriptural account of creation of man:

Gen 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Gen 1:28 *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Gen 1:29 *And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.*

Gen 1:30 *And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.*

Pleasure: v. 27; the greatest pleasure that can be had by man is having a personal relationship with God and other saints. Additionally, God made Adam and Eve for each other.

Possessions: v. 29; God gave Adam every herb bearing seed; every fruit bearing tree; green herbs for meat.

Power: v. 28; Adam was to be fruitful; multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of sea and the fowl of the air and every living thing.

God has been called the maker and fulfiller of desire. He created Adam and Eve with desires and provided them with means to fulfill those desires. Until they sinned Adam and Eve were blessed with their God-given desires being satisfied. This lesson will consider the God-given desires of pleasure, possessions, and power.

When the first pair sinned and Satan usurped authority over the world, this wonderful situation ended. Through grace men could still find peace with God, and be allowed to commune with Him, and love Him, but that required the great Sacrifice of Jesus. It became a struggle to please God.

The author remembers that when he was a newly saved boy that there was a desire to please God, to be in fellowship with Him, but was frustrated in not doing what he desired to do. Later, he discovered that to be a common frustration. The Apostle Paul plainly expresses that sentiment:

Rom 7:15 *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

Rom 7:16 *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

Rom 7:17 *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

Rom 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

Rom 7:19 *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

Rom 7:20 *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

Rom 7:21 *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

Rom 7:22 *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

Rom 7:23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

Rom 7:24 *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Rom 7:25 *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

III. SATAN'S PERVERSION OF PLEASURE, POSSESSIONS, AND POWER

In the temptation of Eve, Satan perverted these God-given desires:

Gen 3:6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

1. Pleasure—good for food and pleasant to the eyes;
2. Possessions—she took of the fruit thereof;
3. Power-- a tree to be desired to make one wise.

Even in the temptation of Christ, Satan used these same techniques; Christ was human and was therefore subject to these same desires. Luke 4:1-13

1. Pleasure--command this stone that it be made bread;
2. Possessions—offered Him all the kingdoms of the world;
3. Power—power to command angelic intervention.

Satan continues to use these God-given desires to lead men astray.

1. Desire for pleasure can degenerate to hedonism;
2. Desire for possessions can degenerate to materialism;
3. Desire for power can degenerate to egotism.

If desires for pleasure, possessions, and power make us vulnerable to temptation can they be good? The draw to pleasure, possessions, and power cannot be rooted in our sin nature, since Satan appealed to Adam and Eve with these things before they had a sinful nature. Certainly Christ did not ever have a sinful nature and Satan offered Him perverted pleasure, possessions, and power. How could Christ be tempted with these perverted desires?—because He was (is) human.

IV. God Appeals to Us with These Desires

Reward of Pleasure

Psa 16:11 *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

Reward of Possessions

Mat 6:19 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

Mat 6:20 *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

Mat 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Reward of Power

Luk 12:40 *Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Luk 12:41 *Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?*

Luk 12:42 *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?*

Luk 12:43 *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

Luk 12:44 *Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Pleasure, Possessions, and Power are legitimate objects of desire that our Creator has instilled in us, and by which He can motivate us to obedience. Evil, however, counter-attacks by tempting us to direct these legitimate desires to improper objects.

V. How to Gain Eternal Pleasure, Possessions, and Power

The way of the world and Satan is to gain these things in the present world. The Lord's way is to forego them in the present and gain them in the future. God is only pleased though faith:

Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a **rewarder** of them that diligently seek him.*

Where does this leave “Prosperity Theology?”

Consider the following three disciplines addressed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:1-18:

Fasting—denying the pleasure of eating to gain pleasure with God.

Mat 6:16 *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Mat 6:17 *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;*

Mat 6:18 *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

Giving---denying the possession of riches to gain possessions from God.

Mat 6:1 *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

Mat 6:2 *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Mat 6:3 *But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:*

Mat 6:4 *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

Prayer--- denying one's own way; seeking God's way; submitting to His Will.

Mat 6:5 *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Mat 6:6 *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Mat 6:7 *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

Mat 6:8 *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

Mat 6:9 *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

Some monastic orders have tried to accomplish this through their own efforts by:

A vow of chastity—foregoing pleasure;

A vow of poverty---foregoing possessions;

A vow of obedience---foregoing of living life one's own way.

It is not a matter of no gratification but a matter of delayed gratification.

Jesus told his disciples they could become great in the next world by being a servant in this one:

Mar 10:42 *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.*

Mar 10:43 *But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:*

Mar 10:44 *And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*

Mar 10:45 *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

VI. The World Does Not Satisfy

Mat 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

The Beatitudes

Mat 5:2 *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*

Mat 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Mat 5:4 *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

Mat 5:5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

Mat 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Mat 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

Mat 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

Mat 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

Mat 5:10 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Mat 5:11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

Mat 5:12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Def. **BLESS'ED**, pp. Made happy or prosperous; extolled; pronounced happy.

BLESS'ED, a. Happy; prosperous in worldly affairs; enjoying spiritual happiness and the favor of God; enjoying heavenly felicity.

Each statement in the Beatitudes is intended to overturn our very natural way of thinking about temporal matters. God's ways are higher than our ways. Blessed are you if you are not driven by desires of temporal pleasure, possessions, and power. Not to misunderstand that statement: God often provides those things and places on men the responsibility to utilize them properly (to God's glory). But, striving for them should not be the object of one's existence.

Job 1:21 *And said, 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.*

Blessed are you if you are kind and merciful—LIKE THE FATHER.-

VII. I Would Be Content If. . .

If I could do this or that or something else. . .

If I had just a little more income. . .

If I just had opportunity (power) to do this or that. . .

Solomon wrote about his experiences with such things:

The Vanity of Self-Indulgence

Ecc 2:1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

Ecc 2:2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

Ecc 2:3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

Ecc 2:4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

Ecc 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

Ecc 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

Ecc 2:7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

Ecc 2:8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

Ecc 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

Ecc 2:10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Ecc 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Terms such as “I, me, and mine” are used over forty times in these eleven verses. Solomon found all this to be vain.

People have been classified into three groups:

Foolish people do not learn from their mistakes;

Smart people learn from their mistakes;

Wise people learn from other people’s mistakes.

Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from Solomon’s experiences.

VIII. No True, Lasting Pleasure, Possessions, or Power Under the Sun

All is Vanity

Ecc 1:1 *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

Ecc 1:2 *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*

Ecc 1:3 *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh **under the sun**?*

Ecc 1:4 *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.*

Ecc 1:5 *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*

Ecc 1:6 *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.*

Ecc 1:7 *All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*

Ecc 1:8 *All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*

Ecc 1:9 *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing **under the sun**.*

Ecc 1:10 *Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

Ecc 1:11 *There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

A key term here is, “under the sun.” All the elements, including the sun, will melt in a fervent heat. There is nothing new under the sun, but one day soon for the children of God, all things will be new.

IX. Eternal Pleasure, Possessions, and Power

True wealth can be purchased from God; the very things we need.

Rev_3:18 *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

Isa 55:1 *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

Isa 55:2 *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

Mat 6:19 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

Mat 6:20 *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

Mat 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Mat 6:22 *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

Mat 6:23 *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Mat 6:24 *No man 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.*

How Will the Saints' Heavenly Possessions Be Utilized?

In Revelation 5 John was given a look into heaven (in signified form). Among the things he saw were twenty-four elders (members of the Royal Priesthood) each of whom had on his head a golden crown which had been given them by the King (Jesus). They felt unworthy to wear them, especially in the presence of the king and cast them before the king's throne. Any possessions gained in heaven will be used to glorify God. That is the purpose of man's being.

Rev 4:4 *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

Rev 4:10 *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

Rev 4:11 *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Luk 19:16 *Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*

Luk 19:17 *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*