

Prized Possessions

‘A man was enthusiastically driving his brand new [Ferrari] ... at a[n extremely] high rate of speed. He drove onto an overpass with a far sharper curve than he had expected. His [high-performance, exotic] car spun out of control, and he realized that there was no hope of keeping the car from going over a steep embankment. At the very last moment, he opened his door and jumped. Unfortunately, he caught his arm on the door. His arm was torn from its socket as the car and his detached arm flew over the embankment and burst into flames below. The man ran to the side of the embankment and mourned his loss. A trucker approached who had seen the tragic accident. He stopped his rig and ran up to the man. The trucker could hear the man lamenting the loss of his car: “Oh, my car, my car, my brand-new [Ferrari]!” The trucker grabbed hold of the man and said, “Hey, mister, I’ve got to get you to the hospital right away. You’ve got more problems than the loss of your car; man, you lost your arm!” The man snapped out of his shock and looked down at where his arm had been. He looked back up at the trucker in absolute terror and screamed, “Oh no, I’ve lost my Rolex!!”

Seems to me that if a person could afford those items, they would probably be insured and relatively easily replaced. Since

this man was so distraught, these items must have held a value to him that was more than just their worth in dollars and cents. Otherwise, why would he have been in such distress? Those things must have been his prized possessions in ways that only he knew. Are there things that are similarly valuable to you, though they wouldn't fetch a hill-of-beans worth of cash at a yard sale? Just how important is a fat wad of cash, or these days, a cryptocurrency account with several hundred bitcoins?

Our mistake is in measuring our worth by the world's standards. We all have the excuse that this is what we are born into, and this is all we've been taught. But it's an excuse only until we've come to know Lord Jesus and been born again by the power of Holy Spirit. When that happens, praise God!, all our excuses disappear as a whiff of smoke. Suddenly, or slowly over many years, we gain new eyes that see things as they really are. What's truly valuable and what's nothing but shiny baubles of fleeting entertainment begin to stand apart in stark relief. Yet with the people around us still operating in the world's standards of value and commenting to us about what's good or how enviable this or that is, to some degree we have to keep our minds slightly familiar with their understanding. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to even have an intelligent conversation with them.

The Holy Bible teaches us what to do, what not to do, what to think and what not to think; especially today's readings. Psalm 146:3-4 tells us not to "put your confidence in powerful people;

there is no help for you there”, explaining that they are mere mortals who when they die, “they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them”. Truly, all people, powerful or powerless, aside from their priceless lives, without living faith in God, have little worth, nothing of eternal value, until they come to know their Creator. Isaiah 32:5-7 vividly describes them, in their futures, in pictures that we can see all around us today all too clearly: “ungodly fools will not be heroes. Scoundrels will not be respected. For fools speak foolishness and make evil plans. They practice ungodliness and spread false teachings about the Lord. They deprive the hungry of food and give no water to the thirsty. The smooth tricks of scoundrels are evil. They plot crooked schemes. They lie to convict the poor, even when the cause of the poor is just”. But the joyful anticipation we have even while having to share this planet with them is also proclaimed definitively in the today’s reading of Isaiah in verses 1-3: “a righteous king is coming! And honest princes will rule under him. Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a parched land. Then everyone who has eyes will be able to see the truth, and everyone who has ears will be able to hear it”.

Now when Isaiah prophesies here of a “righteous king”, he’s speaking of the Messiah, the Christ, Yeshua, Jesus. And He has come, completing the greatest mission ever assigned to anyone. Truly a God-sized mission that only the One and Only God could

accomplish. That of God becoming a mortal human man. For the disobedience to the wondrous, perfect Creator Father God and all the evil deeds of all humanity of all time and space, Lord and King Jesus laid Himself on the cross, allowing Himself to be killed at just the perfect time, becoming the sacrifice, taking the punishment that all humanity justly deserves for our evil. In so doing, He fulfilled the righteous justice of God by dying in our place, so that each and every human being who will give their lives on earth to Him, will be saved from all evil, and in exchange, receive Lord Jesus' eternal life. This is not an automatic exchange. People must turn to God through Christ, as they are drawn to Him by Holy Spirit, repudiate their past sins and current corrupt living, and then receive a new life, being born again, anew, from heaven, not an earthly birth. These are the ones who live the rest of their lives on earth seeing and understanding everything through the eyes of faith. And what is faith? Faith is not, as the world believes, a kind of wishful thinking that God is good and will eventually save everybody. No! Faith is the understanding and recognition, the ability to perceive that the earth and universe and all things, seen and unseen, is just as the Holy Bible describes them. That what we see and touch in the world is just a shadow of what's really real. And that it is all passing away. When Christ Jesus comes a second time, very soon now, all this will be replaced with perfect, pristine, and permanently new, unsoiled, unsullied, forever sin-free, living matter. The new heaven and new earth will never

need cleaning! Or rearranging. Or any maintenance whatsoever!

That is what we are all looking forward to. For the current state of affairs in our country, in our world, is getting worse by the minute on the one hand as the great enemy and deceiver, the rebellious traitor against Father God, the devil has begun working overtime to trap as many people as possible, so they forever turn their backs on God, to make them join his rebellion of misery and torment, soon to be consigned forever in hell. On the other hand, those who are responding to the calls of Holy Spirit Who offers each of us infinite love in the gentle, everlasting arms of Him Who painstakingly created each and every one of us, are also increasing in numbers. To the devil's great consternation. Even in places like Afghanistan the church has grown exponentially and our brothers and sisters in the Truth now number in the many thousands, from but a handful twenty years ago. In what increasingly appears to be a preplanned fiasco in the American withdrawal from that country, the current presidential administration and the political party in power are doubling down that things are nowhere near as bad as some are trying to make them out to be. The illegitimate president just last week called this tragedy an "extraordinary success!" And for those who insist that because he claims to be, he is a faithful Roman Catholic Christian, how can they justify his refusal to live and govern as the Bible commands?

How does James 1:27 describe a life of real faith? "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring

for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you”. Just how many new orphans and new widows has Biden created in a just a few days’ time? Among them, the top of the terrorist islamists’ hit list, is the Christians, our brothers and sisters! The brothers are killed, the sisters are killed or become sex slaves, even as young as twelve. Is this caring for widows and orphans? If caring for them is so important to God that they are specifically mentioned, not just here in James but also in 24 other passages, 10 times in Deuteronomy alone, then it’s crystal clear that they are especially precious to God. Why? Because they are the weakest in human society; the ones most easily exploited and tormented by evil men and women.

But not just orphans and widows. For even more precious that they are all who put their trust in God, having faith in Him, and wholeheartedly walking with Him each and ever day of their lives. We, the believers who walk daily, hand in hand, with Lord Jesus, as James 1:18 declares, “we, out of all creation, became His prized possession”. And we are a possession that will never fade away, unlike the sinful wealthy who “will fade away with all of their achievements” (James 1:11). For our Father God, in Christ Jesus, paid for us a price so high that even the entire universe can not equal it. That, folks, is how much He loved us, when we were still totally unlovable. And how much He still loves us, each and every day. So much that He is always with us, His people, His prized possession; always gazing at us with His eyes of love.

