

For your Edification

Things of the World

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Worldliness has so much infiltrated the church that people can no longer distinguish between things of God and those of the world. Churches have become more of social entertainment houses than houses of prayer. What is now known as gospel music is hardly any different from what is sung in pubs and taverns. Gone are the days when a sinner would find himself in tears of repentance at the church altar; a sinner now finds himself in a church only to be fully armed with business acumen. The modern church is so far away from the admonishment of the Lord that ***“ye are not of the world”*** (John 15:19). What is more, many so-called Christians live defeated spiritual lives, being overcome by the temptations of lust, fornication and adultery. Despite this discouraging trend however, no matter how evil and deception may rage, there will always be a minority of sincere people who desire truth, for ***“the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”*** (2 Tim.2:19). And the truly chosen of the Lord are they that overcome the *things* of the world.

But, what are the ***“things of the world”***? Are they riches? Not exactly so for the Bible is full of names of some servants of God who were rich just as there were those who were poor. There are three things of the world which a child of God should guard against. These things have borne fruit to the sin, iniquity and trouble that has filled the earth: ***“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”*** (1 John 2:16). Spell out a sin, you will find that its origin can be traced to what the eyes looked at, the flesh desired, and the pride of life hindered a person from repenting.

The Lust of the Eyes

Eyes are curious, ever desiring to see things. They have an insatiable appetite which if not

controlled will lead a person to feed on anything, including poisonous carrion. It is important to be aware that ***“the eye is not satisfied with seeing”*** (Ecc.1:8). Have you ever wondered why some men, despite being married to a beautiful woman, have found themselves in promiscuous behaviour of lusting after other women? Such are slaves to lust. Their eyes are heavy with adultery and fornication.

When a sin is committed, in that moment, a person realises the filth and pain resulting from the foolishness of his actions. However, it won't be long before he finds himself in other similar iniquities. A married man once asked me a question:

“Pastor, I am always troubled by lust: I have a beautiful wife but I find myself lusting after other women. I have tried to pray and fast, and each time I do this, I seem to have some victory over the lust but it will only be short-lived and I find myself trapped in the same old habits. I love God but I wonder why He permits such things in my life.”

Dear friend, there is no such a thing as being automatically drawn into lust against your will. And to further blame God or Satan for such a wrong habit should be unthinkable. It is important to know that lust is a result of what one permits through the windows of his soul - the eyes. Not even Satan can force you into fornication! Scripture has an important admonition concerning this matter: ***“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren”*** (James 1:14-16).

Was this not the case with King Solomon? He recounted that ***“whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them”*** (Ecc.2:10). So, should we then wonder why he ended up having 700 wives and 300 concubines?

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Clearly, if this king had a much longer life, he would have added more to the thousand women he already had. The obsession of lust knows no limits. Solomon never restrained his eyes; he saw many beautiful women, he fell for them, and his testimony was marred!¹

The problem of the lust of the eyes is recorded to have occurred right in the beginning when Eve “**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**” (Gen.3:6). A child of God should beware of what is before his eyes. Eyes are not just two balls of liquid in the sockets of the skull; they are windows to the soul. What *they* see is processed in a person’s active memory and then passed onto to the subconscious. And what is in the subconscious is ultimately what subtly guides a person’s behaviour. Sadly, some believers are so careless in their spiritual walk, going about casting their eyes on anything they see on the internet, television, magazines, etcetera. Some always find themselves in environments that expose their eyes to all sort of seductive things. It is important to know that eyes can be a blessing or a curse. When the eyes look at the right thing they are light, so to speak, feeding the mind with healthy and right information. The Lord said something about this: “**The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 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!**” (Matthew 6:22-23).

Notice that what the eyes sees will eventually build an appetite in the flesh. The appetite craves to partake of a wrong thing. This appetite can be so obsessive that it becomes...

The lust of the flesh

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem...from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon...And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto

him, and he lay with her...And the woman conceived” (2 Sam.11:1-5).

The first thing to notice here is that David was in a wrong place: at the time *when all kings go forth for battle*, he decided to remain at Jerusalem. Why did David do this? Was it a result of becoming so satisfied with past victories that he felt only his juniors could go on the battlefield? Well, being found in a wrong place (of relaxation instead of the battlefield), on the house-top, his eyes fell on a naked woman. He entertained the luring sight until the flesh began to crave for the woman. What followed marred the testimony of this once honorable and righteous king. Although he later repented and begged God for forgiveness, he had to live up to the harsh unbearable consequences of his sinful actions. Saint Paul stressed on the gravity of the sin of fornication (a product of the lust of the flesh) in this manner: “**Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body**” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

The pleasure of lust is only for a moment but the consequences thereof may last a lifetime. Many people have been caught in the trap and would try to fight their guilt by praying, fasting and trying to yell at the ever troublesome ‘evil thoughts.’ Many times these efforts never yield any results simply because one can never win a warfare in which he is trying to fight an enemy using wrong methods.

Understanding the battle

Temptation seeks to control the mind. The mind is the driving seat which controls a person’s lifestyle. That seat can be occupied with right and inspired thoughts or wrong and filthy ones. What one permits in the mind is what ultimately characterizes his life. This world has different lusts that seek to influence the mind. If one lives like a person of the world, feeding his mind with all the filthy stuff, he or she will surely manifest a defeated and fruitless spiritual life. May I emphasize here that such a life does not happen haphazardly. There is no such a thing. Every person – his behaviour, attitudes, and thought-patterns – is a sum total of what his mind feeds on. The mind is fed through:

- What we spend time seeing and hearing (magazines, movies, books, music, etc.).
- The kind of associations (friendships) we have.
- What we spend time thinking about.

¹ Read 1 Kings 11:4

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These factors are not one-time occurrences; they thrive over a period of time. They are also inter-linked: it is futile for one to try to change his sinful habits by stopping to expose his eyes to the filth of the world but all the while spending time around a people whose talk does not glorify God. Such a person with wrong company will soon or later find himself in filth conversations, laughing about dirty jokes. And it won't be long before the feeling of guilt grips his mind. He or she can yell at the Devil, not knowing that shouting words into the air will never transform him in any way. The problem is not out there somewhere; it is in his mind. Therefore to live a righteous and victorious spiritual life a person should **"be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"** (Romans 12:2).

But, how can the mind be renewed? Well, by:

- Spending time to *hear* the anointed preaching of the Word of God.
- Spending personal time in fellowship with God, through prayer, fasting and reading His Word.
- Spending time with spiritual people who have a sincere and true walk with God

Fellowship with spiritual people is very important to a believer's spiritual welfare. Remember that just as wrong company corrupts good morals, the right one inspires you to become spiritually stronger. Actually one good sign that a person is backsliding is when he begins to get comfort in the company of unspiritual people, with an increasing disinterest in spiritual fellowship - *"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead"* (Proverbs 21:16, cf. Hebrews 10:25). The first Psalm admonishes:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the

righteous.

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:1-6)

Other manifestations of lust

Now, the lust of the flesh isn't just about such filth as fornication or adultery. It refers to all things that are results of carnality such as the quest for recognition and vices like anger, hatred, contentions, and outbursts of wrath. A man who is always full of debate and wanting to be heard and slamming at any person who is at variance with him is simply carnal - ***"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like"*** (Gal.5:19-21).

Today, much of the problems of divisions and schisms among believers are simply a result of many people being full of the flesh which always pulsates them to seek for attention. Usually gossip is quite common in such unhealthy religious environments. In such groupings it is rare to hear people share the good tidings or testimonies that would edify them; when people are together, it is either they are gossiping about other groups they perceive to be wrong, or they are simply talking about certain individuals within their group that they don't seem to see eye to eye with. This situation is exacerbated when people can't discern the wrong spirit among them.

I am thinking about a message that the Lord once gave to that gallant servant of God, apostle **John Mark Louse** of Karamoja, a few months before he died, during his last visit to Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya. He narrated his experience on 7th August, 2014 at my home during an evening fellowship (quoted verbatim from audio recording):

...There is a lot of ignorance in this Message. People are more peaceful and yet the lives they live, according to the Scripture, which is a weighing machine for every activity, is totally empty. Actually, before I left for this journey, I got a dream which shocked me. I saw many believers, including ministers, naked. Totally naked! And then now I was wondering, 'What could this be; what is the problem? What is the meaning of all this?' The Lord

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told me, ‘Anybody who is not baptized by the Holy Ghost is totally naked as you see’.

In this age when many people have false testimonies about experiences of spiritual experiences, one may be tempted to ignore this dream. But anyone who knows the testimony of the call and ministry of John Mark Louse would give serious heed to the message of the dream (Read the testimony of John Mark Louse on www.propheticrevelation.net).

The lukewarm condition of many Christians has become a big stumbling block for some unbelievers to accept the Gospel. The church has become so obsessed with the “Prosperity Gospel” when preaching against lukewarmness and sin should take centre stage. Everything, from doctrine to general conduct to the manner of dressing has become way out of line from what is expected of Christians. The dressing of women folk has become so worldly. The decency of modest dressing has long been abandoned as the church has moved with the tide of winds of change. Worship is no longer flavoured with solemn hymns. Songs of reverence and such as would prepare the heart for the Word of God have been replaced with unholy noise. Surely the Glory of the Lord has departed and many assemblies have become “*synagogues of Satan*”! On one hand are charismatics who often are too zealous but lacking in Biblical knowledge, and on another are fundamentalists who are ever more careful about *letters* but yet lack the power and life of the Word; their lives are just as reproachful. However, all this quagmire hasn’t been without God’s warnings. Since time immemorial and in all ages gone by, there has always been a clarion call for repentance emanating from devout men of God. Such men have never been swayed by popular opinion or modern trends but have always been characterised by a solid uncompromising stand on the Word of God. Once there was **Martin Luther** who proclaimed the “*the Just shall live by faith*”, calling people to come out of the superstitions and traditional dogma of the Dark Ages. **John Wesley** came preaching sanctification. And then came **William Marrion Branham**² with a unique gift and message, unprecedented in the history of Christendom. There will always be a call to repentance. But the question is, are there people to hear what the Spirit is speaking? Well, there will always be some who will

² Read about the life and ministry of William Branham in the Supernatural Book series by Owen Jorgensen (available on Amazon).

experience a conviction, and when a conviction takes place in an individual’s heart, he will either respond to it or the *third thing* of the world will hinder him...

The Pride of Life

Pride is that ego in a person’s heart that prevents him from humbling himself to obey the Word of truth that has convicted his heart. If you are in such a situation, you can go as far as trying to live as though all is well but deep in your heart there will be that constant reminder telling you that your life is not right. Dear friend, never ignore the bidding of the Lord; as long as there is a condemnation in your heart, know that God is greater than your heart and He therefore knows all things – “**For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things**” (1 John 3:20). It is further important to know that the condemnation in our hearts prevents us from having an effective prayer life. Each time one attempts to pray for something, the guilt of sin will rob him of the confidence to stand in God’s presence. The shame of sin will be a dark clothe that stands between him and God. This is a dangerous condition as it makes a believer become vulnerable to all sorts of evil spirits seeking to ruin his life further.

Much of these problems which result from the cravings of the flesh would be avoided when a believer realizes that although he is in the world, he is not of the world. His life should be that of a priest; a consecrated life.



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