

Week 38—Live for What Is Eternal

(Revelation 18:1–19)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you live for what is eternal!



SUNDAY: The Coming Global Financial Collapse

*“No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon** [earthly treasures]” (Matthew 6:24, emphasis added).*

A cataclysmic day is on the horizon of the future that will launch a series of events arresting everyday life on planet Earth! In a single moment—on a single day all over the world—the food supply will end; the transportation system will grind to a halt; the banking system will freeze and default; the luxuries, precious metals, gems, art, and all other hoarded wealth in every country will become worthless; the communications industry will be cut off, and there will be no radio, no TV, no telephone, no Internet; the supply of power will fade and blink off, and darkness will rule in the homes and businesses of the world. In short: there is a day when the lights are going off all over planet Earth—and they won’t be coming on any time soon!

The eighteenth chapter of Revelation gives us a road map for the coming economic collapse of the world. By learning the lessons God has laid down in His Word, we can see what response He desires from His servants—not only in the ultimate collapse but also in any other financial reversals or crises that may prompt widespread panic before the big and final crash.

Now let’s look at an overview of Revelation 18, which is a twin to Revelation 17. In Revelation 17 we find the collapse of the apostate world church—Satan’s harlot bride, the delusion of religion. Revelation 18 now reveals the other member of Satan’s family—materialism, worldliness, and covetousness. From the Garden of Eden onward, Satan has been offering the elusive “greener grass” to humans. According to each person’s own vulnerability, Satan thus whispers his lies: *If only you*

eat this “fruit,” you will have it all! If only you earn this income, you will be happy! If only you reach this level of popularity, power, or success, you will be fulfilled!

Hand in hand with Satan’s fall is the insatiable desire for more. Lucifer himself was discontented with the highest position in heaven—he wanted still more. Humans are born with a thirst for more of whatever they desire. This is the **idolatry of covetousness**.

The Bible clearly describes covetousness—this concept of the idolatrous worship of things: “to long for, be preoccupied with having what God has not given us.” Possessiveness [which is a cousin of covetousness] is “to be selfish and un-sharing with what God has given us.”¹ The book of Proverbs is full of illustrations of such idolatry. The Old Testament prophets have provided many examples of people who were preoccupied with and longed for what God had not given to them: they wanted something else—someone else’s wife or land. Worldliness either makes us covetous (we want what we do not have) or possessive (we want to hold on to what we have). Both are evil.

The most visible sign of covetousness is materialism. A sure sign of the covetous nature of materialism is its *insatiability*. Legitimate desires (such as food, drink, and companionship) can be satisfied. Illegitimate desires (such as pride, envy, greed, and lust), by their very nature, can’t be satisfied.

Materialism is the desire for “things” as opposed to spiritual worship, which is the desire for God. Materialism is seen in a passion for money, possessions, and endless pursuits of physical pleasures and recreations. But all that is going to end. In Revelation 18, the music stops, money fails, and possessions are worthless. In other words, the party is going to be over the moment the lights go out!

Revelation 18 describes the coming global financial collapse: Jesus condemns worldliness (vv. 1–3); Jesus calls saints to come out of worldliness (vv. 4–8); Jesus describes the worthlessness of worldliness (vv. 9–19); and Jesus celebrates the end of worldliness (vv. 20–24).

Why would John have such a vision on a prison island? When we come to Revelation 18 we are looking at the fully-grown evils of this world. As we saw in our study of Revelation 17, Babylon is at the same time an ancient city, a kingdom of the past, as well as a system of religion and a present way of life—worldliness, materialism, and covetousness. Babylonian materialism in Revelation 18 may be distilled down to one word in the Bible: covetousness, which is idolatry. It is the worship of “*mammon*” (money, possessions, and so on) instead of God.

In John’s day, Rome had gone to the limits in extravagance. The Caesars would spend fortunes on a single meal by demanding the most exotic and rarest dishes for their personal consumption. Nero decorated his banquets with roses from Egypt that cost \$70,000; he wore an outfit costing \$40,000—which he only wore once, as was his custom. Caligula demanded such meals as hummingbird and flamingo tongues, pearls costing \$200,000 dissolved in wine, the livers of pike fish, and the brains of peacocks. Because the commoners only earned a penny a day at this time, that gives you a better idea of the extreme lavishness of the Roman hierarchy.²

In the fifth century, St. Augustine noted the message of Revelation 18: the central problem of mankind is idolatry. Idolatry is when we use what we are supposed to worship—and worship what we are supposed to use.

If you put all the evils of our world into that grid, you will come up with this conclusion: Idolatry is using God for our own purposes, such as when we're in danger (in a foxhole, a hospital, a storm cellar, a plane shaking, and so forth) and worshipping anything else (by our devotion to money, sex, and pleasure). In other words, idolatry is using God, whom we are supposed to *worship*, and worshipping the things of earth that we are supposed to *use*.

So then, what does God want us to learn from Revelation 18? Many things, but primarily this: there is life beyond money. Life is more important than possessions; you can only take people with you to heaven.

My Prayer for You This Week: *Oh Father, we think about how often our beloved Lord Jesus talked about money. He told us that money is the monitor of our heart—that our money and the pathway of our money show where our true treasures are invested. And by our use of money we prove to You where our allegiance and worship are directed. We pray that we will, in a very sobering and sincere way before You, ponder what it would be like in this world if we did not have money—if all our possessions and material things were stripped away from us either temporarily or permanently. What is left after we have no finances is really important for eternity. We pray that we would start rethinking life—about how to live in a way that counts, whether we have possessions or not. May we truly start thinking eternally, planning strategically, and talking prophetically so that our life's testimony points to the fact that this world is not our home—we are just parked here temporarily. We pray that You will open our hearts to these truths. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

MONDAY: Jesus Condemns Worldliness

... I saw another angel ... having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried ... with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen ... and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication ... and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury" (Revelation 18:1–3, emphasis added).

The first lesson of Revelation 18 is that worldly possessions can't buy spiritual life, but they *can* buy spiritual death. What we see in the first three verses is the drunkenness of the nations, their fornication, and their living for everything that God will not give them.

In these verses, I can see the rich and powerful families of the world—from Rockefeller to Rothschild, from Getty to Gates—who will stand and watch their billions go up in smoke from

the wrath of God. This scene graphically depicts what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26. And I believe it is what the *loud voice* of Revelation 18:2 will be booming throughout the earth at this global collapse: *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (see Mark 8:36–37).

In the 1930s, William Randolph Hearst controlled many of the world’s newspapers. He was so wealthy that he did not even know what he owned. He bought castles in Europe, had pieces of them taken apart and shipped to California, and then reassembled on his estate. At one time his desire for art was so insatiable that he wanted to have every painting by a particular great master. He vowed to pay any price to get them all. In fact, he gave a blank check to a man he commissioned to travel throughout the world looking for the last painting. After two years, he finally found it. It was crated up in a storage facility in Long Beach, California, in a high security area. When he finally tracked down the owner—it was Hearst *himself!*

If you possessed all the paintings, money, stock, and comforts of life, but lost your own soul—what would you give back in exchange for your soul? That is what Revelation 18 is about. You can have it all on earth, but miss it all in heaven. What a sobering warning! God therefore says, *... You rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ... You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury ...* (James 5:1–3, 5).

From the Old Testament in the Garden of Eden through today, and to the end of time, God says to all peoples: “Get away from the worship of this world!” Don’t lay up treasures that rob you of peace about leaving home because you are afraid that something might happen to them. Don’t have so many possessions that you cannot sleep if you forget to turn on the burglar alarm. Don’t have so much stuff that you cut your vacation short because you have to get back to protect it. The care of riches is covetousness and idolatry. So the Lord says, “Give it to Me!”

The Bible has many grim markers that show where an illegitimate desire has given birth to immense disaster.

Achan’s lust for more led to his death by stoning, and a similar death for all his family. (See Joshua 7.)

Balaam’s greed made him fail to hear his own message. He wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he did not want to live the life of the righteous. (See Numbers 22:4–35.)

Delilah betrayed a man who trusted her, for a payoff. (See Judges 16.)

Solomon’s insatiable desire for more of everything led him away from God. He was warned not to multiply gold, women, and horses. However, he multiplied all three. (See Deuteronomy 17:16–17.)

Gehazi was not content with serving God; he lied to get more and paid dearly for it. (See 2 Kings 5:20–27.)

Judas measured the inestimable value of Jesus in pieces of silver. (See Matthew 26:15.)

Ananias and Sapphira could not let go of the money they possessed, nor the applause they coveted, so God killed them. (See Acts 5:1–11.)

Anything can be worshiped. Worship, simply stated, is “anything which captivates and draws us toward itself.” Here are the most common examples, as well as questions to help you evaluate whether or not you worship something other than God.

Work Worshipers: These are workaholics who are so captivated by work that they are irresistibly drawn to work all the time. *Can you give up your career and your goals in your field to the Lord if He calls you to change directions for Him?*

Escape Worshipers: These persons want to escape reality by worshipping the effects of alcohol or drugs, and thus they become alcoholics or drug addicts. *Can you completely stop taking whatever substances help you escape reality and give your life to the Lord?* If not, you worship the effects that substances give you. The Lord says, “You cannot worship both that and Me.”

Pleasure Worshipers: These may worship pleasure in the sensual realm, and thus become sex addicts, perverts, fornicators, or burn with adulterous lust. *Can you completely end all selfish sensual pleasure pursuits—pornography, fornication, sodomy, and adultery—and repentantly give those desires to the Lord to deal with in His perfect time and way?*

Wealth Worshipers: These persons are drawn by the allurements of wealth and possessions. They may become like the materialistic, greedy, and selfish rich fool Jesus spoke of—one who only planned for prosperity, eating, drinking, and enjoying life. *Can you completely give your money, security, and power into the Lord’s control?* We cannot keep anything that we grasp onto—only what we give away will last forever.

Self Worshipers: These are drawn to the praise of man, and thus they are proud, inward-seeking, calloused, and unfeeling self-centered persons. *Can you give up your pride, self-seeking, self-absorption, and self-focus to humble yourself, deny yourself, and take up your cross to follow Jesus?*

The ultimate test of whether or not you worship something other than God is quite simple: *Can you give it up today?* When nothing satisfies you—you are on dangerous ground!

TUESDAY: Jesus Calls Saints to Come Out of Worldliness

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and ... receive of her plagues. For ... God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, ... give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her” (Revelation 18:4–8, emphasis added).

Revelation 18:4–8 is a repetition of the continually repeated warning. God wants us, His saints, to live out our high calling. We are called to be holy in all parts of our lives. To “separate from” and “get out of Babylon” is called for seven times in the Word of God. (See Isaiah 48:20; 52:11;

Jeremiah 50:8–9; 51:6, 8; Zechariah 2:6–7; Revelation 18:4.) Some of the key calls of God have been for men to get out of worldliness. You may be thinking: *Wait a minute, this is the Tribulation, the end of the world. So what is this?* There are still going to be Christians on the planet. There will always be Christians on this planet because we have the two witnesses (Revelation 11), the 144,000 (Revelation 7 and 14), and the angel preaching the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14). The gospel is continually going out, and people will be responding throughout the Tribulation.

From the Garden of Eden to the end of time, God has the same call to His saints: “Come out of worldliness! Get away from the worship of this world!” Look at what He has to say about this in the following verses.

God called Abraham out of his world to follow His way: *“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you”* (Genesis 12:1).

God called Lot to totally abandon the sinfulness of Sodom: *Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place!”* (Genesis 19:12).

God called Moses to stay out of the very presence of those rebelling against the Lord: ... *“Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram’”* (Numbers 16:23–24).

God promises great blessing for living a life that avoids the ungodliness around us: *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night* (Psalm 1:1–3).

Jesus prayed for our realization that this world is not our home: *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one”* (John 17:14–16).

God expects His children to come out—and stay out—of worldliness: *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? ... For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you”* (2 Corinthians 6:14–17).

God calls us to be careful to not associate with sin: *Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure* (1 Timothy 5:22).

Are you obeying God’s call to come out of worldliness? Are you worshiping God—and God alone? If you are struggling with worldliness, the key to victory and freedom is yielding to and obeying the Lord! For Jesus says, *“... He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ... If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love ...”* (John 15:5, 7, 10a).

WEDNESDAY: The Worthlessness of Worldliness

“The kings of the earth who committed fornication [they knit their lives to the things of this world] and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning” (Revelation 18:9, emphasis added).

The possessions of this world are not worth coveting or worshiping. The words “*weep and lament*” speak of an uncontrollable sobbing and beating of the breast in anguish. Worldly possessions won’t last forever—they are insecure and will not endure in the end. Everything you see around you is going to be destroyed. *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness ...? (2 Peter 3:11).*

Worldly possessions can’t meet our deepest needs. Look at what happens in these verses: “... *‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all” (Revelation 18:10-11, 14).*

That passage lists eight categories of possessions that are going to be destroyed:

1. **Possessions of Security:** In the entire world’s history, the wealth of the rich has been protected against inflation, warfare, and decline because of their investments in gold, silver, and precious stones.
2. **Possessions of External Beauty:** These are the fine materials of clothing, decorating, and fashion.
3. **Possessions of Exquisite Furnishings:** This refers to rare woods such as thuya-nine (a single table top of this choice wood can cost \$10,000) and other expensive building materials like ivory and marble.
4. **Possessions of Personal Luxury:** These are the fragrances of perfumes and incenses, the oils of ointments and beautifiers, the spices of exotic cuisine.
5. **Possessions of Personal Indulgence:** The inclusion of wine would cover all the personal intoxicants, including distilled spirits (not known in the ancient world) and drugs (known and used back then). The oil named may be the olive oil of the ancient world or a prophetic look ahead to the vast petroleum industry.
6. **Possessions of Life:** The list also has foodstuffs for daily life; this would be all agricultural products plus the named fine meats.

7. **Possessions of Transportation:** The word for chariot is not the normal two-wheeler that we might picture from movies like *Ben Hur*; it is the four-wheeled wagon (Greek: *rheda*) of travel. This may be a prophetic look at the vast automotive industry.
8. **Possessions of Slavery:** The inclusion of slaves (“souls of men”) may indicate a resurgence of slavery which, though outlawed by Christian nations in the nineteenth century, continues in Asia and Africa. This could also be a spiritual reference to the sale of indulgences. All these things will be gone.

Worldly possessions can blind the soul to eternal concerns. Look at the depth of these verses in Revelation 18:15–19: *“The merchants ... will stand at a distance ..., weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, ... cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’”*

Remember what the prophet Zephaniah said: *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land* (Zephaniah 1:18).

In four verses in Revelation 18, the earth dwellers lament their loss of luxuries, money, and things (vv. 9, 11, 15, 19) as well as the lightning-like speed of their loss (vv. 10, 17, 19). The “*weeping and wailing*” is the sound of the uncontainable bawling of someone who has lost something irreplaceable. But in all the weeping and wailing, they fail to even notice that the greatest loss is their own souls! What a tragic scene!

THURSDAY: The End of Worldliness

*“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!” Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. ... For **your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.** And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth”* (Revelation 18:20–21, 23–24, emphasis added).

The people refused to listen to God’s servants—His holy apostles and prophets. Thus they lost their opportunity to live forever; instead, they will die forever.

Worldliness uses the deafening spell of entertainment. Gone will be the diversions. There will be no more music and tunes to drown out God and their problems. Music and entertainment will be shut down. The work that has captivated so many, keeping them from spiritual things, will cease. The regular grind (millstone) of life will stop. There will be nothing left to distract the earth dwellers from thoughts of God. This is just another of the endings of chapter 18: the profits of commerce end in verse 11; the enjoyment of exotic commodities end in verse 14; the whole system of materialism burns up in verse 21; and the very sounds of life—music, industry, and home—cease in verse 22. Finally, even light and social life stop in verse 23.

Why? Because of their sorceries “*all the nations were deceived*” (18:23). The Greek word for “sorcery” is *pharmakeia*, which refers to the drug-induced stupors of addiction, the demonic-induced bondage of the astrology industry, the godless and mindless following of evolution, and the dehumanization of mankind by philosophy and secular education.

Drugs and substances will be very prevalent during the end of days, and this trend is present even now. A friend of mine, who was recently in London, said that 200,000 marched there for the legalization of marijuana. People want their drugs and their escape. So God will say, “You were intoxicated, and did not hear My voice, so there is now no hope for you.” All these evils are facing judgment day.

Is there any diversion in your life that is distracting you from giving your all to God?

FRIDAY: Are You a Worldly Person?

... *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever ... wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God* ... (James 4:4, emphasis added).

In Revelation 18 we also find that there are seven elements of the worldly system that Jesus will bring to an end. This is a cause for rejoicing, as they will no longer cause earth dwellers to ignore Him. The Lord will remove everything that has distracted people from looking at Him. To identify current dangers, traps, and snares, we will examine what the Lord will end. Here are the elements that worldliness is built upon—things that disrupt our fellowship with the Lord.

A worldly person’s identity is found in this world, and not in heaven: “*Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore*” (18:21b). Such a person’s identity is found in what they do, have, and hold onto here. They dress like the world, act like the world, and are drawn toward the world. But God will destroy any and all identities that are established apart from Him.

A worldly person finds escape through amusements, entertainments, and pleasure-seeking: “*The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore*” (18:22a). A worldly person has to be amused. Do you know what amusement means? “Muse” means to meditate, so “amuse” means “without meditation.” One of the fastest-growing sectors of our economy and our culture is amusement: parks, games, arcades, and movies.

People no longer want to think; they just want to be carried along by the action and excitement. Society has become so captivated by movies, music, and all else in the entertainment field that they never engage with the living and abiding Word of God. But God is going to turn it all off, and there will be no more distractions.

A worldly person uses work, career accomplishments, and even daily life as a way out of spiritual responsibilities: *“No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore ...”* (18:22b). Christians act the same worldly way when they say, “I don’t have time for that because I have to work” or “I don’t have time to lead my family or read the Bible.” By the sweat of our brow, and diligent labor, we are supposed to earn money to support our family. If we don’t, the Scriptures say that we are worse than an infidel—an unbeliever. Yet we must not be so wound up in our work that we are inconsistent in worship, and miss the joys of fellowship. It is a sign of worldliness when our careers, plans, finances, work schedules, recreation, and entertainment make us so busy that we infrequently engage with the people of God. Even the needs of daily life, such as food and housing, can keep some people away from heavenly living. But God will stop the cycle of life for all earth dwellers.

A worldly person is tied to technology, science, and knowledge of this world—and not the next: *“The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore”* (18:23a). Such a person constantly looks at the Bible through science rather than looking at science through the Bible. The Bible has always communicated the basic principles of hydrology, astrophysics, the rotation of the earth, and the geodesy-balancing of the continents, but the sciences are just now catching up with the Bible. In the industrialized world there has been a blind acceptance and intoxication of humanity by technological convenience. But God will soon cut short that technology.

A worldly person is tied to social life, party life, the calendar, and holidays: *“... The voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore”* (18:23b). This is the person who lives for the weekend. He or she goes from one social event to another because life represents an endless party. Life is more than identifying with this culture and its amusements and entertainment. There is so much more God wants us to know. That is why He lets us see that when He strips away these things, the socialites and partygoers will have nothing left. So they will weep and howl and cry out. But God will stop their partying, and that is all they had to live for.

A worldly person is tied to finances, wealth, and possessions: *“... Your merchants were the great men of the earth ...”* (18:23c). Our society makes gods of the millionaires and billionaires of this world. These earth dwellers find their greatness in money and belongings. They live to acquire and hold and enjoy things. But God is going to erase all the worldly person’s assets.

If your assets were erased, what would you have left that really mattered? You would have the results of what you have invested in finances and time for Christ. You would have the opportunity, without the baggage of things, to go forward in His kingdom.

A worldly person is intoxicated by the world: *“... By your sorcery all the nations were deceived”* (18:23d). The end of this verse speaks of drugs and sorcery, which can include alcohol as well as drug-induced witchcraft. But there are also people who are intoxicated by the world

itself. They can't understand and don't care about the gospel. But God is going to bring an end to this familiar world.

What will the earth really be like when God pulls the plug? In Revelation 18:23a, we find some amazing words: *"The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore ..."* In twenty-first century terms, this verse says the power grid will be shut down. It says that no power, no electricity, and no technology that uses electricity will be running. Revelation 18 marks the end of the world as we know it. According to the Word of God, that will not happen for at least seven years from now. The world that ends in this chapter is a highly technological world that has some type of cashless society. This would require well-functioning computers, or something beyond computers that we don't even know about yet.

Although there is much more that I could say on this, I don't want you to miss the point of today's lesson. And that is to examine yourself in the light of Scripture to see whether any of these descriptions of a worldly person are common in your own life. If you feel convicted by the Holy Spirit, you need to know this truth: ... *You are slaves to the one whom you obey ...* (Romans 6:16 NIV). But you are not without hope.

Through Christ's empowerment, you can break any bondage that manifests itself in a love for the world and all that is in it! The cure begins with the antidote of *contentment*, which we'll administer in tomorrow's lesson. So take heart, for relief is on the way!

SATURDAY: Seven Keys to Contentment

... I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content (Philippians 4:11, emphasis added).

Contentment is a byproduct of following the Shepherd. It is experiencing the inner-peace that only He can provide. It is knowing that He will promote you at the right time. Contentment is the sense of satisfaction that comes to a husband and wife as they emulate the provision and care of the Shepherd to their own children. Contentment comes from serving Christ instead of money, and from providing not only financially for your family, but also emotionally, morally, and spiritually.³

How can such contentment be cultivated in our lives? First Timothy 6:6–17 describes seven principles that promote contentment.

Principle 1—Remember that things are only temporary: ... *Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and ... we can carry nothing out* (1 Timothy 6:6–7). You cannot take it with you. There are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses.

Principle 2—Only seek necessities, and wait for the rest: ... *Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content* (1 Timothy 6:8). We need shelter and the basic provisions of life, but everything beyond that is simply a great blessing. Whether it comes or goes is okay. God has said that all we are supposed to expect in life are food and clothing, so we should be happy with that.

Principle 3—Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity: ... *Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and ... many foolish and harmful lusts For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith ... and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

America has been fed a prosperity diet. You might say, “That is not me—I am not rich.” If you own a car, you are rich. Ninety-five percent of the people in the world can’t afford a car. Your watch and the clothes you have on are worth more than what hundreds of millions of people on earth have. Tens of thousands even starve to death around the world each year, but Americans regularly throw away super-sized leftovers.

Principle 4—Flee materialism: ... *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness* (1 Timothy 6:11). Do you seek to accumulate possessions—or to grow in Christlikeness? Value what will count for eternity!

Principle 5—Cling to eternal life: *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called Keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing* (1 Timothy 6:12, 14). We need a whole generation of people who are holding tighter to eternal life than they are to this world.

The writer of Hebrews says, ... *You had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven* (Hebrews 10:34). When those Christians were persecuted and their jobs and possessions taken away, they still rejoiced because their focus was on Christ.

If we’re not careful, before long our possessions can possess *us*. They then become an anchor that holds us back. The care of riches clouds our minds from seeking the purity of Christ.

Principle 6—Fix your hope on God: *Command those who are rich ... not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God ...* (1 Timothy 6:17). There is nothing wrong with wealth, but we are to recognize the danger of relying upon it. All that we own can evaporate as quickly as a blip on a computer screen. There are few things that are real possessions in this world. Through money, stocks, and bonds you are trusting that a company, a bank, or a government won’t fail. But the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy, can never fail us—and our trust in Him is certain!

Principle 7—Give until it hurts: *Let them do good, ... ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life* (1 Timothy 6:18–19). The real cure for materialism is to give until it hurts! Giving “until it hurts” means giving at the cost of personal sacrifice. For example, the widow gave both of her mites, or all that she had (Mark 12:42–44). The woman who anointed Jesus broke the flask of fragrant oil and irrecoverably gave all she had to Him (Luke 7:37–47). Sacrificial gifts are especially important to Jesus.

Make a choice to live in hope. The advantages of contentment are many: freedom, gratitude, rest, peace—all of which are also components of good health. Those who are content do not have to worry about the latest styles or what to wear tomorrow. Those who are content can

rejoice in their neighbor's good fortune without having to feel inferior. Those who are content do not fret about wrinkles or graying because they accept what comes. Those who are content do not have to worry how they might buy this or that because they have no desire for this or that. Those who are content are not consumed with how to get out of debt because they have no debt. They thus have time for gratitude even in small things, and they have time for relationships because their possessions and the bank do not own them.

If what was just described seems beyond you right now, I encourage you to ask the Lord to help you move in that direction. In doing so, you will be choosing to live for what is eternal. Be content—willingly surrender all that you are and have to the Lord. Then faithfully fight the good fight of faith by laying hold on the eternal life to which you were also called.

As this week's devotional closes, I encourage you to softly and worshipfully sing the words of this beautiful old song as a prayer of commitment to the Lord.

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay!
Mold me and make me After Thy will,
While I am waiting, Yielded and still.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now,
As in Thy presence, Humbly I bow.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, Help me I pray!
Power, all power Surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see
Christ only, always, Living in me.*

—Adelaide A. Pollard, 1862–1934

