

## ***Blessings***

“Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is ‘finding his place in it,’ while really it is *finding its place in him.*” Thus writes the demon “Screwtape” to his apprentice “Wormwood” in C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*.

The context of the quote above is that Screwtape is giving advice on how to make Wormwood’s “appointed subject” a less effective, or ineffective, or false (carnal) christian. Despite the excellent portrayal of the devil’s desire and ability to use the “lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life” to entice and lead away the proclaimed believer, even those who have read this “standard” of christian literature seem to have missed or forgotten the warnings contained therein. Much of this is due to our present day misunderstanding of the terms *blessed* and *prosperity*.

Some have suggested, and sometimes even outright accused, that in my writing I am preaching doctrines of *asceticism*, *Platonism*, *socialism*, or even *communism*. What I am actually preaching, however, is the *unselfish simplicity of living* that is taught throughout the Word of God. Some have accused me (perhaps without fully understanding the source) of a teaching similar to that of the *Essenes*, the sect of hermit-like Jewish “monks” made famous by Josephus and by the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. This distinction is, in their defense, easily confused, for Jesus and the Apostles taught many of the precepts adhered to by this group of devout “separatists.” There are, however, some vital Scriptural differences between the way the Essenes lived and the way the True Believer, the Saint of God, and the Ekklesia are to Live. One such clear distinction is that many of the Essenes believed in adherence to the Law of Moses as a *means* by which to attain religious perfection or life with God.

I, however, welcome, and I am also thankful for, such misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the intent of my writings. Such adversities, some in an obsessive spirit “with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, (and) evil suspicions...” and others, lovingly challenging me to clarify the points, cause me to go running to the Word of God, and to be more careful of my use of words and quotations, as well as

revealing faults and haughty, evil thoughts within myself, for which I am thankful in either case. It has indeed been my intent to “stir up the hornets’ nest,” knowing that in doing so I would be stung, both in love and in hate, and now I am thankful for the lessons learned by the resulting wounds, even desiring to be “stung” some more, in God’s timing, for the benefit of the resulting lessons.

As I have sent these writings out, by mail and by email on the internet, my stated intent has been to “wake people up” to the realization that what the Prophets, Yeshua, and the writing Apostles foretold about the “end times church” is taking place right before our very eyes. But our eyes are fixed on the “cares of the world,” and in our “pride of life” we fail to observe the effect of the “deceitfulness of riches” on the ecclesia as a whole. We’ve hardly noticed, or approached with genuine concern, the fact that our “love one for another” has “waxed cold.” A few, a *very* few, have seen, appreciated, and responded to the writings, some pointing out “interpretive difficulties” (my communicative skills or admitted lack thereof), while others, eager to defend “their position” or taking immediate offense at the content, have not-too-kindly assaulted my character and judged my heart, no questions asked. The majority, however, have simply not responded. As Yeshua said, “I would rather they be hot or cold.” There is nothing I can do for the complacent, and likewise, nothing they can do for me or for others in their silence. The hot and cold, however, have been equally challenging and beneficial.

Why am I sharing all this, and what has it to do with “*Blessings?*” Simply this: 1) I intend to use this chapter as a “postscript response” to praises, objections, and criticisms, and, 2) the *blessings* I have already received from “both hot and cold camps” has been of more value to me personally than gold or silver, and I wish to pass those blessings on, and, 3) that the reader may fully understand the difference between *God’s blessings of prosperity* and *our material accumulation* or “love of mammon.”

There are two forms of accumulated wealth. One form we accumulate and cannot take with us, and the other we *should* accumulate and will “take with us.” Picture it in this way, if you will: Accumulated material wealth, or mammon, is like a spider’s web. An unwitting creature can usually break free from one strand of such a web, unless they are weak or injured or unaware of their peril. However, if there are two, or three, or more strands, it becomes

increasingly difficult to break free from the web. The creature gets caught to begin with because they are unwary and the strands are thin; they are hard to see (with the eyes of our flesh), and they are sticky, so that if one comes close enough, they find themselves stuck, and in their efforts to escape they become further entangled in other strands of the web. Too late have they observed the carcasses hanging in the spider's construction. When they become weary from their struggles, the spider moves in and feasts on its victim. The resulting energy the spider gains from its consumption of the creature lends to its ability to increase the magnitude of the web. Thus does living for our own desires lead to the strengthening and increase of the Spider's kingdom, and our fellows follow in their own way to be ensnared. We, in our folly, and considering ourselves to be wise, believe that we know where these webs are located, and in our lack of diligence we fail to see the single strand that is attached to the main web. Also, it has been erringly taught and accepted that it's ok to be stuck in the web, because we have grace. But to have grace is in reality to have the means to escape the web, and to thus overcome the world.

Now, view the planet earth as the domain of the Spider. For thousands of years he has been spinning and feasting and spinning ever more. So subtle is he that even when we think to have attained, or to think that we "stand," we find ourselves caught. When we should have been praying to God for understanding to help us to see the strands of the web and avoid them, we wait instead until we are caught, and the Spider is already upon us, and then we cry out to Him for deliverance. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

God has given us already all that we need to know in order to avoid this end. He has made warning signs and maps, and has provided us with guides and The Guide that, if we heed and follow, we will avoid being entangled. But the Spider, as he did with Eve, whispers to us that God doesn't really mean what He says, that the warning signs and maps are unnecessary, and that the guides are mistaken. And as we grow and increase in this world's prosperity, we become hungrier, and we become fatter and slower and more unwitting, and so the more easily ensnared. And so clever has the enemy been that, even as we struggle to escape the web, we tell our companions that we're "just fine," and we feel that we're in no danger because "God loves us." Yes, He loves us, and He weeps at our entanglements.

Please pardon me the use of this simplistic allegory; it is not my intent to assault the dignity of the reader or to minimize his or her intelligence. Instead, it is my intent to draw a recognizable picture that points at God's Word and that opens our eyes to the very real presence of such deceptions and snares. We were, after all, told to beware the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pride of life, and *the desire for other things*.

The enemy uses the terms prosperity and blessing as a lure and a snare in his domain. He has altered the meanings subtly to infer wealth and personal happiness, which are the very things the Word of God has warned us about and against. Wealth and personal happiness are conditions of self, and so "of this world," while the true prosperity (increase of the knowledge and application of God's will) and blessing (the results of receiving the Love of the Truth and being transformed by the renewing of our minds) are conditions of un-self, meant to focus us toward the Kingdom of God, which is not in (yet) or of this world except in the form of a true disciple of Yeshua ha Messiach. Also there is a distinction between the modern word *happy* (actually a term derived from the Greek, Hap, the god of luck), which is of the flesh, and the words glad(ness) and joy(ful), which are fruits of the Spirit of Truth. But most people, even professing believers, make no distinction between these terms in thought or in deed. If they're not prosperous, or comfortably endowed with this world's goods or practices, then they're not happy; they feel as though they are not blessed. However, if they are successful, for whatever reason, at accumulating to the point of comfort, then they may often consider themselves to be blessed, or wise, when they're really just happy because they have less worldly difficulties than some others do.

Allow me to point out before I continue that when the term happy is used in a positive manner in the old testament Scriptures it is a Greek term used by the translators of the Septuagint for a Hebrew word, the root being 'ashar, which means (to be) straight, level, right, or figuratively, to go forward, be honest, prosper: - (call, be) bless (-ed, happy), go, guide, lead, relieve. It indicates the means whereby the one is blessed and the character or state of mind of such a one as much as the fact that he is blessed. The Greek words for "happy" most often used by the writers and translators of the new testament Scriptures are not derived from hap, or luck, but instead from the term makarizo, which indicates to beautify, pronounce or esteem (as) fortunate, or to call blessed. Our present day English renderings of God's Word often cause us to miss such important distinctions. Thus, many today

confuse having good luck with being blessed, even if they do say they attribute their fortune to God. God desires for us to be blessed by living the straight, level, right way, and to thereby be beautified by our diligently being just, merciful, and *righteous*. This is a far cry from what most people today consider “happiness” to be.

One of the saddest and most primary reasons for someone to file for divorce is that, “I’m not happy anymore,” or that, “I was no longer happy.” Read this, “The desires of my *self* were not being fulfilled.” This same desire for happiness, and the lack thereof, also is the root cause for suicide, lawsuits, out of wedlock pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, spouse beating, adultery, robbery, homosexuality, and murder; indeed, the *love of mammon*, or the *desire to be happy*, is the root of all kinds of evil. How so murder? Murder is the result of *vengeance*; “I won’t be happy until that person is dead.” Murder is also the result of *covetousness*; “I won’t be happy until I have what that person has, so I’ll kill him and take it.” Murder is the result of *anger*; “That person made me unhappy, so I’m going to kill him.” The desire for happiness can indeed be linked directly to every form of wickedness stated above. And yet our culture worships happiness. To be “happy” by today’s worldly standard is justification for us to carry out every imaginable form of evil we might practice so that we might feel fulfilled, or, happy. It is in this frame of mind that we transform the covetous thought *I want* into the idolatrous thought *I will*.

In terms of worldliness, *happiness* and *blessedness* share the same relationship with *wealth* and *prosperity* as are between *adultery* (and/or out of wedlock sex) and *marriage*. In each case, the one is a mockery, a counterfeit, of the other, that (so it seems) gives us what we want while keeping our personal control (self-will) intact. That is the reason that God’s Word equates covetousness with idolatry and idolatry with adultery. Because we covet happiness, we may commit adultery, which is a counterfeit of the *true blessing*. Because we covet happiness, we may accumulate material wealth, which is counterfeit to *true prosperity*. We have looked to other sources besides God for our comfort and security, and so have committed idolatry. We say “*I want*” and “*I will*” instead of “*I submit, He wills, and I obey*.”

Our wealth need not necessarily be of silver and gold or of houses and lands. It can be of (worldly) knowledge or wisdom, it can be of “religion,” it can be of any “private” thing which we associate with being “our own.” While it may

not be of *riches* in the material sense, it *is* of “the pride of life,” one of the “materials” used, along with “the deceitfulness of riches” and “the desire for other things,” to fabricate the subtle strands of the web of deception. It is just another thing that we must have or retain to make us feel happy. For Eve, eating the fruit was just the symptom; the problem was that she wanted to be “happier,” or more self-fulfilled. In the same manner, for Adam, eating the fruit was the symptom; the sin was that he heeded his wife instead of obeying God, conjecturally for fear of losing his happiness with Eve, but possibly as a futile attempt to “keep her” or “save her.” This fear of not being happy, or self-fulfilled, is the opposite of Love, and directly opposes it. Eve, at a point, said (or thought), “I will”, as did Adam.

The battle we wage is between personal happiness and unselfish Love. The one leads to perdition, while the other leads to the Kingdom of God. In this battle, the weapons of our warfare should not be carnal, or of this world. We have access to the Word of God as our weapon. But the enemy cheats. The powers and principalities in high places and in heavenly realms use *the things of this world* as their weapons of choice; our God uses the things not of this world, the things of the Kingdom of Heaven, as should we if we claim to be on His side. When we embrace the very weapons of the enemy while claiming to belong to God, whose side are we really assisting?

One might ask how I know these things to be true. The truth is, that despite being a “believer” for 20 years, I was heavily ensnared in many strands of the web. In fact, the Spider was preparing to dine, and was just waiting for my last feeble attempt at being happy to fail, and for my efforts to have exhausted me to the point in which I would be easy to sting, and to not put up a fight. By God’s mercy, I came to the realization that my faith and hope were false, grounded in personal happiness. To be accepted, to have the admiration of my family and friends, was my god of happiness. I had always remarked that I would never consider suicide as an option because, to me, to do so was the ultimate in lack of faith and giving up hope of God’s promises. As the Spider waited nearby, I invoked this false (for me at the time) premise, and God answered, “Is this really True?” My eyes were opened just enough to see that it was not a proper fear of God that kept me from suicide, but the fear of death without Him, accompanied by the failure to have attained happiness before that death. When by God’s Grace I saw this, I then counted myself as already dead, for the Spider and his sting were inevitable. The fear, and the sting, departed along with that death, and the strands were cut. When I despised personal happiness and acceptance of

others ( the “god of being loved and accepted”) as dead things, and replaced them with Life in Yeshua ha Messiach as the only Truth, the strands were detached, and I Lived. Death, for me, had lost his sting.

As in most all things, there are also two forms of suicide one may commit. The most common and the most known form is of the contrivances of the devil, and occurs when a person, by their own hand and/or will, puts an end to their physical existence out of fear, or pain, or lack of happiness. It is the suicide of despair, and makes for one of the Spider’s favorite meals. After he has fed for awhile on the misery of an individual, and before the person can truly seek and see The Truth of his or her despair, the Spider waits nearby and repeats himself many times that all hope is lost, that no more personal anguish can be derived from their punitive existence, and that the pain will go away with a simple effort of will. This death is, all told, the result of the person’s desire to be happy. To them, their suicide and the absence of their pain is the means and the end. There is nothing left for them that is more important than the happiness, the “peace,” that the end of their life will bring. It is indeed a subtle counterfeit of the One True Suicide, the Right Suicide, the Death to Self, by which we, in The Blood of The Lamb, can overcome the Spider.

This is a very true concept, but I must by need be very careful, for the enemy would twist what I am saying and use it as a justification for some hurting person in deep anguish to justify suicide, or for some antagonist, though well-meaning, to say that I advocate physical suicide. Nothing could be farther from the truth; my purpose is to show the subtle differences between the enemy’s counterfeits and the True Faith of Death to Self in Yeshua ha Messiach, which is to “put on Christ.”

Yeshua said, “*Anyone* who does not *forsake all* that he has *cannot* be My disciple.” This does not mean to forsake by means of killing our physical bodies by our own hand, for then we would bear no good fruit by allowing Him to Live through our dead, *but still breathing*, existence in order to harvest those who are called and chosen to His Truth. No, but He means for us to deny our *selves*, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things; the money-bags that wear out and tear and the cisterns that break; the clothes and gold that moths corrupt and that thieves break in and steal. But there is a *type* of suicide, called “death to self,” that must take place if we’re to be filled with *His Life*. It is foolishness to the Greeks and a

stumbling block for the Jews. We must die to our dreams of *happiness* in order to acquire *joy* and *gladness*, the True gold and covering. We cannot possibly maintain *dreams and desires of self- happiness* and the *joy of our salvation* at the same time. No one can serve two masters. It is at the hands of the false puppet-master, personal happiness, that we find only physical and spiritual death, which is actually total separation from the True Master of Hope, Joy, and Gladness.

We can read of prosperity in various forms in the Psalms and the Proverbs. As I've mentioned in other places, the key to understanding the meanings and usages of the words *prosperity* and *riches* in these books in particular, as well as in the Prophets, is that often the usages are *encoded*; they are put forth in the form of riddles and enigmas. *They often don't mean what they first appear to mean*. One must be truly seeking and diligently hunting and earnestly digging for God's Truth in order to see their true applications. How do I know this? The Word tells us so in the first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, verses 1-7, and the second chapter, especially, but not only, in verses 1-5:

***To know wisdom and instruction***

***To perceive the words of understanding***

*To receive the instruction of wisdom*

*Justice, judgment, and equity;*

*To give prudence to the simple*

*To the young man knowledge and discretion ---*

*A wise man will hear and increase learning*

***And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel***

***To understand a proverb and an enigma***

***The words of the wise and their riddles***



*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*

***But fools despise wisdom and instruction***

*My son, if you receive my words*

*And treasure my commands within you*

*So that you incline your ear to wisdom*

*And apply your heart to understanding;*

*Yes, if you cry out for discernment*

*And lift up your voice for understanding*

*If you seek her as silver*

*And search for her as for hidden treasures;*

*Then you will understand the fear of the Lord*

*And find the knowledge of God.*

In Proverbs 3:9-10, the Holy Spirit says, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.” At first glance, this appears to be supporting the concept of “seed faith.” But before we come to any conclusions, let’s see what Yeshua had to say about it:

“No one 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 both God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap *nor gather into barns*; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value

than they? ... But seek first the *Kingdom of God* and *His righteousness*, and all of these things shall be added unto you.”

Also, let's look at the fellow who *did* gather into barns for his retirement, so to speak: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, seeing I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods layed up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God.” It is clear from the teachings of Yeshua (and the entirety of Scripture) that what that man *should* have done was to take the blessings and share them with the less fortunate instead of storing them up. Then he would have had blessings in the Kingdom.

Keep in mind as we go on that a “fool” is *one who is wise in his own eyes* or *who does not fear God*. Now let's look at some other proverbs:

***So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain***

*It takes away the life of its owners*

*Treasures of wickedness profit nothing*

**But righteousness delivers from death**

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city*

*The destruction of the poor is their poverty*

*Riches do not profit in the day of wrath*

*But righteousness delivers from death*

*The righteousness of the upright will deliver them*

*But the unfaithful will be taken by their own lust*

*A gracious woman retains honor*

*But ruthless men retain riches*

*He who trusts in his riches will fall*

*But the righteous will flourish like foliage*

*The wicked are overthrown and are no more*

*But the house of the righteous will stand*

*There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing*

*And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches*

*The ransom of a man's life is his riches*

*But the poor does not hear rebuke*

*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways*

*But a good man will be satisfied from above*

*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor*

*But the rich has many friends*

*He who despises his neighbor sins*

*But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he*

*He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker*

*But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy*

*In the house of the righteous there is much treasure*

*But in the revenue of the wicked is trouble*

*Better is a little with the fear of the Lord*

*Than great treasure with trouble*

*Better is a little with righteousness*

*Than vast revenue without justice*

*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!*

*And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver*

*Better is a dry morsel with quietness  
Than a house full of feasting with strife*

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city  
And like a high wall in his own esteem*

*The poor man uses entreaties  
But the rich answers roughly*

*Wealth makes many friends  
But the poor is separated from his friend*

*He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord  
And He will pay back what he has given*

*Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor  
Will also cry himself and not be heard*

*He who loves pleasure will be a poor man*

*He who loves wine and oil will not be rich*

*The rich and the poor have this in common*

*The Lord is the Maker of them all*

*He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed*

*For he gives of his bread to the poor*

*A faithful man will abound with blessings*

*But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished*

*A man with an evil eye hastens after riches*

*And does not consider that poverty will come upon him*

*The rich man is wise in his own eyes*

*But the poor who has understanding searches him out*

*He who gives to the poor will have no lack*

*But he who hides his eyes will have many curses*

*The righteous considers the cause of the poor*

*But the wicked does not understand such knowledge*

“There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation --- oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”

*The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:*

*The Lord gives light to the eyes of both.*

It's quite obvious, for those who seek, that there are two ways to be poor, two ways to be rich, and two ways to be wise. Those who choose to be poor *in a worldly sense* will be rich in wisdom and in eternal blessings. Those who choose to be rich *in a worldly sense* will be poor in knowledge, in the fear of the Lord, and in God's blessings. Esau traded the *true blessing* for the *worldly blessing*, and so, though “blessed” with temporary things, he lost the true blessing. In the same way, in today's world, we store up (and in doing so we withhold from the poor) and as a result, we lose the true blessing.

Today, we consider it “wise” to invest in a worldly house, to invest in the stock market, and to store up funds for retirement and for our “children's” inheritance; the Word clearly opposes such things, and considers them to be foolishness and wickedness. We miss the eternal blessing by thinking *temporally*, or in accordance with this world's wisdom. But Yeshua tells us rather to store up treasures in heaven by giving instead of storing up. The righteous, though they have little, will give it, and give it with joy, understanding these things as he does. The “prudent,” however, will harden his heart to the needs of those around him, considering it “wise” to store up or to withhold from those in need. And therein are they ensnared.

The fear of God is a widely misunderstood concept. Satan's true strategy with unscriptural concepts such as “sinner's prayer salvation” and “eternal

security” is to lessen or remove a righteous fear of God from the “believer,” with the result being disobedience to God’s word, or, *licentiousness*. The enemy then encourages us to fear instead the things of this world; poverty, future troubles, concerns with what men think of us rather than what God says He thinks of us; such things of self then become our focus. In such ways the enemy is victorious, because “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Yeshua ha Messiach, they are again *entangled in them and overcome*, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it *would have been better for them not to have known **the way of righteousness***, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment (thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself) delivered to them.”

It is idolatry to fear anything more than we do our God and His Righteous Judgment. It is idolatry to fear *uncertainties* more than we do the *certainty* that we will be weighed and judged by our Lord. It is idolatry and covetousness to *store up* against those fears, for in doing so we trust that there will be problems “tomorrow” more than we trust God’s provisions for us for tomorrow. Thus Yeshua says, “worry not about tomorrow; sufficient unto (this) day is the evil thereof.” How is it, then, that we can consider ourselves “blessed” when we are denying the very sovereignty of the God we’re supposedly being “blessed” by?

It is the fear of not having for ourselves for tomorrow that prevents many of us from giving or sharing what we have in hand today. We covet what we have, and consider it “ours,” not understanding that *all* good things come from God, and what that means. When we then store up and covet for ourselves what has come from God, we are also denying, or in the terms used in the proverbs and the psalms, we are *despising and oppressing* God’s other children, whom He loves equally; He is not the least pleased by such behavior.

What is the difference between the *fear of God* and *the fear of the things of the world*? The difference can be found in the sources. God is all-good, God is Love, God is the Truth, and God’s judgments are righteous judgments. The fear of the world, however, is the *opposite* of Love, and of Truth, and of righteousness, and of goodness. To fear the world and the things of the world is the opposite of fearing God. It is idolatry. To *fear being without* when tomorrow comes is to *distrust God*, and so is to not fear Him. It is foolishness.



Therefore, whoever stores up for himself for tomorrow out of the fear of what it will bring is called in the Word of God a *fool*.

The *Wrath of God* is for the fool, or the wicked, or the unrighteous, or for those who don't trust or don't fear Him (same thing), or for those who store up for tomorrow, or "gather up into barns." It is not for the righteous, who has received the Love of the Truth and, as a result, seeks, and understands, and acts on these things. The fear that a righteous man has for God is a righteous fear; it is a fear that, being aware of the nature of God, it "keeps us in line;" it keeps us from stumbling from the path and into the "entanglements;" it is a fear founded in Love, knowing that He chastises us not to punish, but to save us. This righteous fear of God *begins* as a fear of His Wrath; but once coming to knowledge of His Truth it is transformed, as we are, or should be, into a *fear of His Love*. It is, or should be, a fear that we welcome, along with the chastisements that keep us safe from spiritual harm.

I have often heard the gospel of the "awesome respect" fear of God taught. To me this is like teaching that one should have an "awesome respect" for the freight train that approaches on the track that we shouldn't have been on to begin with, with our foot caught in the railing. As I wrote once before, I doubt that the Acts Church said, in the vernacular of the day, "Gee Gawd, yer awwwsommme. We really respect Yewww." Such a "fear" is like having the awesome respect of a child for a father that they know will never spank them; such a child will quickly learn the art of licentiousness (2Peter2), and will grow up to perish. A truly Loving Father will not allow such a thing to happen to His Own child. The child who fears his Father's righteous correction and judgment will also Love Him. Yet, I perceive the permissive fear of "awesome respect" prevalent in the church today, along with the licentiousness it produces. The church *believes* they're warm and well-fed, or blessed, but they're *prosperous*, naked, and empty. They have lost the wisdom and the thirst for righteousness that comes with a true, righteous fear of God. "And My people love to have it so."

Let's take a look at what Yeshua said constitutes being blessed:

***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven***

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,*

*For they shall be filled*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake*

*For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*

Notice, if you will, that Yeshua began and ended with those to whom it applies, "for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." Those are the *poor in spirit* and *who are persecuted for righteousness' sake* ("Those who choose to walk righteously in ha Messiach Yeshua shall be persecuted"). The poor in spirit are not haughty, not self-confident, not comfortable with their "lot in life," they know that they need more than *their own spirit and personal happiness*, and they're not "wise in their own eyes," but they seek, knowing that there is more to know concerning God and His righteousness. They are open to correction and rebuke, and even are they thankful for it.

But in this world, such people are often despised as weak, underly-ambitious, overly-religious, holier-than-thou, or simply for knowing and sharing the secrets of God's kingdom with those who perish, even when exhorting "the church." Many times they are simply ignored or despised or frowned upon, which is also a type of persecution. Please don't confuse these people with the "self-righteous, bible-thumping, religious zealots" that often break the law, disobey the masters' rules at their places of employment, or harass the victims of the enemy at abortion clinic doors. Yes, we should deal with proclaimed believers who would think to have an abortion, but we are not to impose our moral standards on the lost, who do not know or recognize God's Truth. To such, instead, we are to merely "put on Christ" and show His Love. Instead of carrying signs which proclaim, "baby killers!" we should bear signs saying, "Come home with us; we won't judge you or forsake you; we'll provide for your needs in your time of trouble." Once they come to know the true Yeshua, we needn't be concerned about them having another abortion, and we will have saved *two* lives, if not more. Unfortunately, because of such self-righteous behavior, "believers" have been barred from further action outside of these places of misery, and we have caused the name of Yeshua to be slandered. "The name of God has been blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." I don't care if it did feel right; it is wrong to force our moral standards on the unbeliever, who *doesn't know the Truth*. When we do so, it shows that *we don't know the Truth either*, though we claim to. We're the blind dictating to the blind.

If there is someone at work who we feel is open to the gospel because, by our humility, hard work, and obedience we have set an example of righteousness, then we should invite them home or out somewhere off of the employers' premises to explain the things of God to them. Don't point out their sin; that's not our job (unless they claim to be a True Believer). Instead, use the Power that God has given us for such things: The Gospel of Death to Self in Yeshua ha Messiach.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." We today do everything in *our power* to keep from having to mourn. To mourn is not to be "happy." Did Yeshua say, "Blessed are those who are happy?" No, those who mourn, mourn for a lost world of people who cannot see with spirit-filled eyes, who think that the world lottery of life is the answer to all of their problems. A person who truly desires God will mourn until the day that they awake in His likeness. Then, they know, they will be comforted, and satisfied.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” In our society of the world’s standards, a successful, “real go-getter” is admired by one and all. “Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies, he shall carry away nothing; his glory *shall not descend with him*. Though while he lives he *blesses himself*, for men will praise you when you do well for yourself, he shall go to the generation of his fathers; *they shall never see the light*.” We should, however, be diligent “go-getters” where the things of God, meekness, humility, and the righteousness of a giving attitude are concerned. We should build up *Heavenly* wealth, which Yeshua will bring with him as reward at his coming: “He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich.”

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” What is *righteousness*? Is it “obeying the rules, giving a tithe, providing material wealth for your own flesh and blood, and going to church twice a week?” No, that is *worldly righteousness*, or, dead works. But it is what most consider as being “christian” today. Someone who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be in a *constant* hope of the arrival of Yeshua the King and the establishment of His Kingdom here on Earth. They will *diligently* store up treasures of peace, and giving, and mercy, and truth in their “heavenly accounts,” knowing that all worldly things are as good as burned. They will *hunger and thirst* to be like Yeshua and so please the Father. They will know where their inheritance is, and hunger and thirst for the righteousness and peace of it. They will watch and pray, and share all that they have of God’s truth and the “material things” that God has given to them. They will not be satisfied with anything on this world, for the Manna of Heaven is not to be found here, except for in a spiritual capacity in the Truth of the Word.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Is it more merciful to wait until a person comes to us (in shame) with a need before we (grudgingly) fulfill it out of what *God has given us*, or to keep our eyes open, diligently, for the needs around us, and to go to them and offer assistance, or better yet, to be an “anonymous friend” who meets their need without producing embarrassment? Is it better to “give alms” out of our increase, or to “tithe?” Doesn’t Jesus say we should do both, and to not disregard justice, and mercy, and righteousness? Many of us blind ourselves to need. We harden our hearts so as not to keep our eyes open for need. The most merciful will go *searching among the ecclesia* for those who are in need. In our abundant society, there should be no needs in the ecclesia whatsoever, especially with

so many proclaiming to be “christians.” Then, I must ask, why is there so much need? Because those who claim to believe, and who have been “blessed,” have hardened their hearts. There can be no other reason. Yet, it makes us feel “righteous” when we give a tithe. Didn’t Jesus teach us about this very thing? Didn’t Luke write that among the ekklesia “there were none who lacked anything?” Is there anyone in *our* church today who lacks?

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” We are told that, whenever possible, we are to be at peace with all men. Our place should be to spread, through example, the gospel of Peace with God. Yet we are constantly at war with the “non-christians” around us. We invoke “The Constitution” (which is a device of men) to defend our “rights” (True Believers have no rights in this world, and they know and accept it), and we go to Satan’s courts to defend our moral positions. What are we thinking? Is this our idea of being “peacemakers?” Instead, shouldn’t we rather be wronged for the Name of our Savior, in the Name of Peace?

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” That is a promise, that if we truly seek Him and His righteousness with all of our hearts, all of our souls, and all of our strength, we will (not *might*) see Him, both now, as in a glass darkly, and Then, face to Face.

Now, please bear with me as I return to a comparison of the concepts of asceticism, Platonism, socialism, communism, and the practices of the Essenes, and show that what I have written about has little to do with these things, except that they are *counterfeits* of The Good and Right Way.

Asceticism is the practice of withdrawing completely from society for one’s own devout pursuits, whether they be “godly” or not. I personally would promote *temporary periods* of asceticism if the purpose were to seek God, and fast and pray, with the intent of returning to some “society” in order to share God’s goodness with others. Some forms of asceticism may be considered to be “shadows” of the “asceticism” we will attain once we are truly separated from this world into His Kingdom. Through the ages, however, there have been men and women, some known as “monks,” or certain orders of “nuns,” who have made it their purpose in life to be separate from the world. I’m not saying that none of these have been called to do so. I do believe, however, that even if we’re not called to produce children by our flesh, we are called to be fruitful and multiply after we have “fallen into the

ground and died,” or died to ourselves. I don’t see how this can be accomplished, in the general sense, if we “leave the world.” I personally believe that most *permanent* forms of asceticism are self-works oriented methods of attaining “holiness.” As such, I believe an ascetic life to be, in many cases, a counterfeit of godly *sanctification*.

I won’t profess to know much about Platonism. I have heard that there were some, perhaps agnostics, or better yet, “Gnostics,” who tried to blend the teachings of Plato, the Greek philosopher, with the teachings of Christ. The followers of Platonism, in my understanding, believed the world to be an evil, wicked place, and so far I agree with them. Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary says of Platonism, “The belief that physical objects are impermanent representations of unchanging Ideas, and that Ideas alone give true knowledge as they are known by the mind.” Thus did Descartes reply, “I think therefore I am.” From what I can gather, Platonists actually believe(d) that the world, physically, in and of itself, does not exist except as an Idea. Therefore, one could gather, evil does not exist except as an Idea. I could delve more deeply into this, but I don’t believe it’s necessary to have an understanding of quantum mechanics and dimensional mathematics to understand God’s Love and Will for us. Suffice it to say that the bible does indicate the existence of “separate realities,” or heavens, or dimensions, and that the modern science of quantum mechanics seems to have discovered some indicators of these phenomena. But would the average reader need, or want, or care to go into such matters? If so, write me, and I will be happy to search out with you what the Word says of such things. Once again, suffice it to say that Platonism is a separate and distinct philosophy from that of the Word of God, and as such I do not adhere to its fundamentals. While the Apostle Paul found some use for the metaphysics of the Greeks, still, their response was not, “We believe,” but, “let’s talk about it some more.” They were not interested in God’s Truth, but in worldly knowledge.

Socialism and communism are worldly counterfeits, at best, of The Way of the early Church. Again, they are man’s efforts to attain Utopia on Earth without God. They are humanist ideologies. As such, I am quite tempted to not even dignify the accusation(s) against me that I support such a concept with an answer. But the Word says to be prepared to give answer, so I will attempt to do so.

I believe that there is a necessary place, especially in today’s increasingly wicked world, for communities of True Believers, the Ekklesia (not

communities of christendom). Such a group could combine their resources for fellowship, live a life of sanctification from the evils of the world, and limit the access of wickedness to their fellowship. Having said that, let me say that it may be allowable or beneficial provided it is carried out in a non-ascetic manner. What good could they do for the lost, otherwise? They would be withholding the riches of God from the poor in the knowledge of God if they were separatists to the degree that they had nothing to do with the world. Personally, I have often dreamed of, and still desire, a community of True Believers who share all their goods, meet for fellowship daily, and live as a True Family, if it was done in accordance with the Word. Such a place would be a refuge from the world of Television, automobiles, traffic, pornography, politics, and the general smut of the world around us. But such a community would only be helpful if *they can know us by our love one for another*. It would have to be somewhat “obvious.” And it would be difficult. It has been attempted before many times, sometimes with a degree of “success” (whole villages of Believers have been martyred for doing so by the world, the Catholic Church, and Reformation Protestantism); sometimes the success has been measured in terms of longevity.

But there are dangers, and such a project would have to be considered carefully before being carried out. I have personally done some research in this area, and the difficulties are manifold (but Yeshua *did* say, “difficult is the way”). Some have entered in to such a prospect with romantic ideas of, “won’t it be so nice! Life will be so easy!” only to find out that such a venture entails much unselfishness, much hard work, and much risk. Such a life is not all “milk and honey” (remember that there were giants in the land of mild and honey), though with proper planning, and all parties knowing up front what is to be involved, I believe there is much to be said for a well-planned-out community of True Believers.

I believe the main danger would be a spiritual one. Getting puffed up with the “We’re-better-than-they-are” syndrome would be one danger. Legalism or some form of spiritual tyranny would be another. You can bet that Satan would assign some of his most proficient workers to see to it that it failed miserably, lest it “catch on.” I have personal experience with this. And there’s always the (world) government, which has usually found a way to literally destroy such attempts at holy living.

Now, do I say such a community is necessary for salvation (as some have ignorantly accused me of)? (By the way, I do not accuse those of you who, *in*

*His Love*, have sought *clarification!*) On the one hand, certainly not. On the other hand, a True Body will live as a “community within their community” if the Holy Spirit dwells among them. They will share, and give without reservation, they will meet daily whenever possible, they will pray together diligently and continuously, they will not be given to worldly goods (as considering them to be “necessities”), and no one among them will lack anything. They will be a light to the world. After all, there is One Faith, One Ekklesia, and One Baptism, correct? And is Yeshua the same yesterday, today, and forever? And is His Body the same yesterday, today, and forever? It should be! After all, what did Yeshua *own*?

I believe there is a lack of the evidence of the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the “christian community” today because God is grieved. We have not been doing what He told us to do, and what Yeshua Ha Messiach and the Apostles exemplified for us. We have “heaped unto ourselves teachers” who teach what our itching ears want to hear. We have exchanged *blessings* for *worldly prosperity*, as He and the writing Apostles, and the Prophets, said we would. The ecclesia, as a whole, like Israel, has not kept the Covenant. That is why I so strongly make the remarks that I do.

I have saved the Essenes for last because, while they show many things that are *right* in attempting to live a holy life, they also exemplify many things that are *wrong* in attempting to do so outside of His provisions and His Spirit.

Josephus, for a period of his youth, lived as an Essene, and so he had an in-depth knowledge, and even an admiration, for their practices. I would encourage everyone to read the account Josephus gives of the Essenes in *The Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.2-14, and while it is too long to include here, there is much to be seen of the teachings of Yeshua in their everyday practices. It can be viewed on the internet or at the library, and is usually on bookstore shelves. I can see why many historians infer that Yeshua was a Rabbi of the Essenes. But the way of the Essenes should not be regarded as a *means to an end*; rather, we today could do well in learning *some* of their examples of devout and holy living.

Let’s take a look at how these devout men lived in ways that reflect a similarity to the Gospel taught by Yeshua ha Messiach:



*“These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative (community-oriented) as raises our admiration. Nor is there anyone to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, - insomuch, that among them all there is no appearance of poverty or excess of riches, but every one’s possessions are intermingled with every other’s possessions: and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren.”* Gee, this reads like the Acts fellowship, doesn’t it?

*“They have no certain city but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go into such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them.”* So, while not being ascetic to the point of living separate from the cities, they formed communities within the cities and lived a communal life of one accord.

*“Nor do they either buy or sell anything to one another; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself.”*

*“And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary.”*

If one were to read these verses in context with the whole, they would see that while some forms of Mosaic legalism existed amongst them, they endeavored to live the *spirit* of the Law, and they were devout in maintaining a holy and selfless life. I was amazed upon first reading Josephus’ accounts that the Essenes lived a lifestyle very similar to the teachings and lifestyles of The Way of Yeshua and the early ecclesia. They were in the world but not of it, they lived in one accord, they had all things in common and considered nothing their own; in short, aside from their adherence to the Law of Moses, they lived what we read in the second and fourth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

The downside, or spiritual dangers involved with attempting to live their lifestyle *to the letter*, is that some of them appear to have given some credence to the Kabal, which is Jewish mysticism involving the respect of angelic beings (sorcery). One can see in the writings of Peter and Paul that some of them had attempted to infiltrate the early church with Mosaic doctrines as well as with fables involving celestial beings. Aside from this very real danger of false doctrines, however, they lived lives of piety and devotion and unselfishness that were also present in the "Acts church." Such a thing would be similar to a community of believers today that, while being devout and unselfish and community oriented, were at the same time practicing yoga or transcendental meditation. All of the good things they were doing would come to naught, as far as the Kingdom is concerned, if they were to mistakenly give themselves over to doctrines of demons. We have only One Mediator by which we need to communicate, and to communicate, or attempt to, with any other spirit is not only dangerous, it is idolatry. But does that mean we should throw out everything they were doing *right* because of the things they were doing *wrong*? Let's examine that.

Platonism, asceticism, communism, and socialism are all forms of *pantheism*, which is, in short, the practice of attaining the oneness and perfection of "godliness" while *leaving God, and in particular leaving Yeshua ha Messiach and His atonement out of it*. The very nature of any counterfeit, if it is a well-done counterfeit, is that it resembles as closely as possible the "real thing" while having no real value. But the enemy has maneuvered a very crafty tactic. He has inspired men and women to create many counterfeits that closely resemble the "real thing," and in defense the modern churches have made every effort to not even *appear* to look like any of the counterfeits. This is the same as if, every time a counterfeit dollar appeared, the government then made new dollars that would not appear as any of the counterfeits. Before very long, the "real" dollar would no longer look anything like the *original* real dollar. And the government would continue changing the appearance as the counterfeiters came up with a deception after each adjustment. After awhile, no one, even the counterfeiters, would remember what the *original* dollar looked like. It may be recorded in some book, but no one would be able to spend it! Even if they had an original dollar, if they tried to use it, they would be accused of trying to use a counterfeit. This is exactly what has happened to the Ecclesia over the last two thousand years. Today's church has no resemblance to the original, and we won't revert to the original because not only have we forgotten what it looked like in the first place, we've

also become comfortable with the replacements, and we're afraid of looking like the counterfeits. The master counterfeiter has done his job well.

Let's now look at a verse from Acts chapter two:

"And *all* that believed *were together* and had *all things common*; and sold their possessions and goods, and *parted them to all men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily *with one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and *singleness of heart*."

"All...were  
together...all things common...with one accord...singleness of heart."  
"Father, that they may one as we are one."

I'm not encouraging *modern day ecumenism*, here! But I *am* encouraging biblical, Yeshua-centered *ekklesia community* in His Truth.

The Greek word used above for *common* is **koinos**, which in this instance means, "*shared by all or several*." The Greek word(s) used for *together* is actually a compilation of three words: **epi**, which means *a superimposition of time, place, order, etc., as a relation of distribution among, in a place, on behalf of*; **to**, which *basically* means *all*; and **autos**, which is *of the other persons*. The Greek word used for *accord* here is **homothumadon** which means *unanimously, with one accord (mind)*.

There can be no doubt as to what Luke was writing; he was *inferring* or *suggesting* nothing! He was, though, stating that they immediately, upon repentance and being filled with the spirit of Truth, developed a (dare I say?) *communistic*, or communicative, or community-oriented mindset. Do we see this in the Church today? I, for one, have yet to

see it. It seems as though we've been out-counterfeited and entangled in the web.

Of one thing we can be certain: the church today is not the Ecclesia that was. There is but One Faith, One Ecclesia, and One Baptism, One God and Father of all. Dare we disentangle ourselves from the webs of counterfeits and material prosperity and self-(in)-control and personal comfort so that we can discover eternal blessings in Yeshua ha Messiach? Or are we content to abide in *our* prosperity and await what will never happen? 2 Peter 2:20-22

The *True* prosperity, the eternal blessing, awaits us in the Promise of God, His Kingdom on Earth, if we deny ourselves, give all to God in Yeshua ha Messiach, and dwell according to our love (unselfishness) towards one another. There is no other Way.