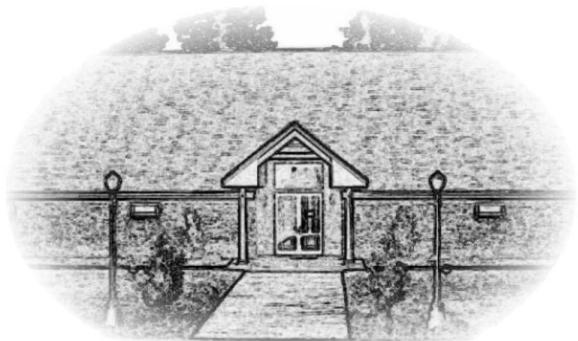


McRaven Road Church of Christ Bulletin

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Material Prosperity

The Scriptures teach us that the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). At the same time, we are taught that we must work in order to have money to buy the things we need and to have to give to those less fortunate than ourselves (Eph. 4:28; Acts 20:33-35; 2 Thess. 3:10). It is also clear from the Scriptures that there have been godly rich people. The rich among Christians are addressed and warned against the pitfalls of wealth with no indication that their prosperity was wrong of itself (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Instead they are told that God has richly given them their wealth to be enjoyed (v. 17). John wished for Gaius, "that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 Jn. 2). Local churches depend on the prosperity of their members' in

order to do their work (1 Cor. 16:2). With all of this, why would Jesus say that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:24)?

The reason it is difficult to the point of near impossible is that "... they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9). Very few can handle the pressure. The danger is not so much that they will become like the miser sitting in his vault room running his fingers through his piles of money. The danger is in the things that having money, or the perception of having it, can bring them, i.e., Pride, Popularity, Prestige, and Power.

These tend to blend together in the minds many who desire wealth. While we cannot read the hearts and minds of such people, over time we can see enough to reasonably discern their motives by their demeanor. At any rate, God knows.

We see people, even in the church, who are like Hezekiah—very proud of their wealth and willing to show it off (2 Kgs. 20:12-18). It is obvious they want you to know what they are worth materially. Though some of these may be very generous with their money, they do it in a way to make sure that folks take note of it - thus increasing their popularity. They understand that "the rich has many friends" (Prov. 14:20). They love being known as "pillars of the community," not so much because of their character, but because of what they mean to the community financially. Because of their wealth, or perception of it, they may hold prestigious positions in various secular institutions and unfortunately at times leadership roles in the church. All woven into this is the desire to have power over people. No one denies that money is power. It often makes folks become obligated to the one who has it. Also the prestige and popularity that money has brought (or bought) results in more power.

On the other hand, we have seen people who are obviously well off, who seem to be completely unaffected by the "big four." They are humble, and show no signs of desiring popularity, prestige or power, but rather doing what the rich are

told to do: "... that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). To such persons we can truly wish for them to prosper even as their soul prospers.

Brother or Sister in Christ, if you have been blessed with prosperity, whatever the amount, please be aware of the temptations and snares it can bring and determine to avoid them. Thank God for blessing you with it and manage it in a way that will glorify Him and serve others.

Be aware also that the love of money is not limited to the well-to-do. The warning against the love of money was first addressed to poor slaves (1 Tim. 6:1) before it was expanded to charging the rich. In Proverbs 30, Agur the son of Jakeh recognized both the dangers of being rich and being poor when he prayed, "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:7-9). The inordinate love of money affects people all across the entire spectrum of the economic scale.

— Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

I Saw a Friend Die

Death is indeed sad. To watch a death scene is an event not easily erased from one's catalog of memories. I saw a friend die one time. It was a slow death—so slow in fact that he didn't even know it was happening. I saw it coming. I warned him. Others did likewise. But it was all to no avail. He just finally died. May I take a few moments of your time and tell you about it? It could save your life.

He first began to show signs of disease with a loss of appetite. He didn't seemingly care to eat, and even when he ate, he paid not attention to what he ate. He simply was not bothered nor interested in diet. He remarked that other matters needed his attention. His work needed his attention. So did his yard. So did several other things. He had little time to eat. oo many things were demanding of his time.

Now showing sings of a loss of strength, he became sluggish and obviously anemic. It became more and more apparent that he was ill. I talked with him about it. He was evasive and showed no signs of wanting to talk about his condition. He made excuses about this loss of weight, and was not at all impressed with my suggestion that he see the doctor. "I will," he said, "when I become convinced I need one."

Then a terrible thought occurred to me. This is a contagious disease; and even if he will not allow us to take care of him, surely he will let us help his children. "My children are my businesses," he said. "If I die, they're going to die with me."

Now they are all gone. My friend, his wife and a lovely group of children. At one time, all of them were the picture of a healthy, happy people, busily engaged in living a good, clean, healthy life. Now they are gone, and I can't believe it has happened. Why should it happen? Why should a seemingly happy family just up and die like that? It's sad. So sad.

The preceding story is true. You have already surmised, I'm sure, that the death of this family was spiritual, not physical. I hasten to remind you, however, that the fact that the death was not physical should not lessen the impact of the story. On the contrary, it should bring a greater emphasis to it. Spiritual demise is a most tragic, unnecessary event. Hope is gone. The future is bleak beyond belief. It's sad, because this death has a remedy; it can be prevented.

What causes this spiritual demise? If it is so that there is a remedy, why in the same of common logic was not the remedy

applied? Why was not something said or done to stop this spiritual passing away?

The fact is, you can't force people to serve God. They have the right to refuse spiritual warnings, ignore spiritual warnings, cast off spiritual concerns. And they will often disdain admonitions to take care of their spiritual health.

I hope this father and mother realize that consequences and implications in their lack of concern. It is not enough that they don't realize their own spiritual condition, but how sad that they are committing spiritual homicide by bringing about the spiritual death of their own children,

children who had before been interested in learning about Jesus and His people. What man has the right to commit such an act? Will not God hold him accountable for such dereliction? Surely He will!

Yes, I saw a friend die—just pass away. A friend and brother in the Lord has gone. Will he come back? Can he bring his family back? I don't know, but I hope so. How sad to see someone you love die.

— Dee Bowman

News & Notes . . .

Leonard White is improving and anticipates good reports from his doctors.

Work Group # will meet immediately after this morning's service.

Let's remember **Laura Vail, Hubert Puckett**, and others who need our prayers and attention.

Our Gospel meeting with **Jim Stauffer** will be at the end of next month, **September 27 - October 2**. Cards and/or flyers to help spread the word should be available in a few weeks.

Scripture reading: Psalm 100:1-5

Elders: Jerry Farley.....601-825-5555
Ron Lanning.....901-496-2431
Leonard White.....601-924-2645

Deacons: Robert Boyd.....601-924-5100
Todd Bridges.....601-924-3810
Sam Everett.....601-707-3903
Greg McFarland.....601-540-0382

Preachers: Leonard White.....601-924-2645
Stefan Richardson...256-460-9280

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible classes 9:00 A.M.
Worship 10:00 A.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible classes 7:00 P.M.