***Mastery of the Details of Life  
  
RV224-02***

We are studying Revelation 18:1-24. "Political Babylon" is our subject, and this is segment number 14.

The future rise and fall of Babylon as the center of world government and commerce is met with sadness by the businessmen of the earth in the tribulation when that happens. Babylon had become for them a source of great wealth and of great pleasure as international entrepreneurs. Those, we have seen, who are in maritime enterprises are hurt by the disappearance of Babylon as the conduit for their cargoes. The total destruction of Babylon causes great sorrow among the merchant marine as shipping ceases. Babylon's destruction is watched from afar by these people with disbelief and great mourning.

The tribulation will be an era when secular humanism will reach the zenith of its influence. People will be then preoccupied primarily with material possessions. It's very important that, on the background of what we are reading here in Revelation 18, which deals with the collapse of political and economic Babylon, that we understand that, night and day, the preoccupation is with things. Wealth will be pursued with a vengeance, and indulgence and luxuries will be unrestrained. There will be little thought about God or about personal readiness to face Him after death in all of His Holiness. Men will live for the moment with no interest beyond the money that they have, and the money they are making. They have no concern for anything other than that.

So, when Babylon falls, they have nothing to live for. Babylon has corrupted mankind spiritually with its mystery religion of idolatry. That religion of idolatry is expressed to this very day in a variety of ways. This religion is being indeed expressed in a variety of ways to this very day, including the hype of Nimrod's religion as being your own deity – the worship of yourself. I remind you that this why the Hindus bow when they meet you. They're bowing to your innate deity. That concept of idolatry is even coming under the demand today of government control.

There is a paragraph in an article from "The Christian World Report" entitled "Buddhists in Sri Lanka Demand Anti-Conversion Laws to Curb Growth of Christian Minority. The opening paragraphs say, "Last June, three Christians, working in a remote village in Sri Lanka, were assaulted by 15 Buddhist monks, including a chief priest, and a group of youths from a neighboring village. The attackers destroyed the Christians' belongings; evicted them from the village; and, burned their Bibles, books, and teaching materials. A newspaper report following the attack accused the Christians of immoral activities, and praised the monks as saviors of Buddhism. The incident was not an isolated event in Sri Lanka, although Buddhism is the country's state religion, and thus protected and promoted by the government. The nation's constitution theoretically ensures freedom for other religions. However, it does not always work that way.

"More recently, Christians in Sri Lanka say they are concerned by reports that Buddhist clergy are pressuring the government to pass anti-conversion laws. Observers fear that even now, legislation could be in the pipeline that may emerge in parliament without warning."

A little later, the article says, "A pastor noted that the Roman Catholic Church in Sri Lanka has distanced itself from evangelicals, claiming that it too has been the victim of conversion practices. This strategy of self-preservation has strengthened the arm of the Buddhist opposition who see the Roman Catholic Church at this stage as allies, the pastor said. Much harm has resulted from public criticism of Christians by Roman Catholic leadership."

A little farther down, it says one thing more: "On September 9th, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress met to discuss the situation facing Buddhists, saying that it was the duty of the government to protect Buddhism through the Constitution."

So, it's interesting that the Roman Catholics, which also is an idolatrous religion, and worship idols under the guise of saints, that it finds a natural affinity for Buddhism. Buddhism, as you know, is an offshoot of Hinduism. So, it is all part of the Babylonian religion of idolatry created by Nimrod. Here, when they come up against the truth and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, they think that the way to stop it is by getting government laws which forbid Christians from converting Buddhists and pagans in these countries.

So, Babylon is hated by God. Its religious system is something that He loathes, because it strikes against the command that He is the only God, and no other god is to be worshiped or honored. Babylon has taught people, worst of all, to make an idol of money, and to worship, and to pursue it with great devotion. This is where the religion has its finest expression in the tribulation. It is going to be materialism at its highest level.

However, Babylon is also hated by God because it has corrupted the divine institution of human government to create a welfare state with citizen dependency on the state for their needs. That is against the Word of God, along with joining nations in international enterprises. Internationalism violates the divine institution of government. God's plan is for nations to be independent so that Satan cannot control the whole world. Eventually, he'll get all those nations together in a world government, which is where the leaders of the world today are moving as fast as they can. When they do, Satan will have total control through his man the antichrist.

So, Babylon has corrupted the divine institution of government. Government was designed by God to maintain control after the flood over the sin nature of man, but it has been perverted to being itself a sponsor of evil ways. And I don't need to spell that out for you within what is taking place in our own government today.

The key to this preservation of the role of government instead of being the servant of the citizens has been transferred into Babylon's tyrannical master. The government is the master of the people. We Christians suffer under that. But we Christians are also admonished that we are to obey the laws of the government under which we live.

**Paying Income Taxes to a Socialist Government**

At our church council meeting this past week, one of the men indicated that one of the people we are associated with says that he is never going to pay income tax again. He has figured out how to circumvent this. I told the man that we must be prepared to fulfill our Christian responsibility of visiting the prisoners who are taken up for breaking the laws of the land, because sooner or later, they're going to get that tax resister. It is irritating to live under a government that is violating the Word of God, the laws of God, and the purpose of God, but nevertheless, it is to be respected for the authority that it has, and we should seek to change it by those legitimate means. The key to this perversion of the role of government has been the material benefits which it distributes to its obedient devotees. That happens now.

Many people can't wait, at certain times of the month, to go to the mailbox to get that check from the government. They are dependent upon it. They are waiting for the handout, and this will come to its highest level in the tribulation. This is the background – how much government is able to use its power. Remember, that that's what government always is. Government is the exercise of power to bring benefits to those who are obedient to it. In the tribulation, materialism is what life is going to be all about. A government that is capable of pouring out these things is going to be fondly looked upon and whet for when it is destroyed. When Babylon falls, there's going to be pandemonium in the streets for those who are waiting for the next government handout.

**Material Things for us Christians**

So, I would like to pause to remind you once more of our Christian duty and responsibility when it comes to material things. I don't want any of you to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and tell me that I did not perform my job and my duty toward you to in alerting you to those things that are destructive to you spiritually, particularly in the context of the pressures that are upon us in this age. Certainly, the doctrine of the mastery of the details of life is something that we have to know and to understand.

**The Mastery of the Details of Life**

First of all, what do we mean by this? This, of course, is not the terminology that you find in the Bible. This is something that we have put together to convey a biblical concept of many passages of Scripture.

**Mastery**

When we speak about mastery, we mean control; victory; and, command of. Basically, this refers to a correct mental outlook toward anything. When you have a right concept of something, you're in charge of it. What it means is freedom from enslavement. That's what we mean by mastery. You're not a slave.

**Details**

What do we mean by details? Details refer to the various things that people seek to have. Money is one of them, but there are other things, such as fame, and prestige, and power of various kinds. There are many things that are the things that people pursue in life. Those are the details.

**Life**

Life means the daily existence of a person.

So, this phrase, the mastery of the details of life, connotes personal control over various desires in one's life. All of us live lives where priorities compete. Everyone has a scale of values which determines his priorities, and drives his actions. You were here this morning in this room under something less than maximum comfortable conditions because you have a set of values that take seriously the admonition of the Word of God that you should not neglect attending church services. Therefore, because you have the value for doctrine, you have gone through all the stages of taking the steps necessary for you to be here in this room. You did that because you put a priority upon the Word of God, and rightly so.

Within the world's human viewpoint system of values, there is a high priority on money, and on what one can secure with that money to fulfill the desires of the sin nature. So, priorities may be one's possessions; popularity; your friends; pleasures; health; sex; status symbols; prestige; education; or, power in various ways. All these things are details. These are the things that make up life that people are interested in having.

The divine viewpoint scale of priorities, however, is radically different from this. That is very simply that doctrine, stored in one's human spirit through the grace system of perception, is to be the Christian's highest priority in life.

2 Peter 3:18, closing the second epistle of the apostle Peter, puts it this way: "But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." How are you going to grow in the experience of the grace of God? How are you going to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? It is not by sitting upon some mountain top meditating. You're going to grow because you've learned doctrine, because you have that number one.

There are people who should be in this room today from within the midst of our congregation who are not here because priority is not upon doctrine. Other things easily caused them to substitute. It is the will of God that believers conduct their lives around knowing and obeying doctrine. Yes, it's not enough to know it. It is also necessary to obey it. That's what James 1:22 says: "But prove yourself doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. We do have people who sit and they listen to the instruction. They hear probably the best doctoral instruction taking place in this city. I know it. In fact, I should be given an award by the city (with probably 600,000 other people), but I am to be presented by the mayor of this city with an award. What was the title of that award? It was something about big achievers. I forget. I'll have to look it up again. I'm going to a breakfast; I'm going to wear a tie; and, then I will be presented with this recognition of my merit because at Berean Church, we have the best doctrinal instruction in town every Sunday.

**Learn it**

Well, we have people who do get the best instruction, and then they don't listen to it. They don't obey it. That is a very big mistake. You have to know. That's stage one, which means you have to be here to be instructed. You are going to go very far on your own reading books. You're not going to go very far on your own, rummaging around with your friends, and talking about the Bible, and sharing your mutual ignorance. You're going to grow in the knowledge of Christ when you are instructed by somebody who knows something, and have the ability from God to be able to convey that.

**Do it**

So, once you learn, the second stage is to do it.

**Bible Doctrine**

So, all else in life in the plan of God is secondary for the Christian. This principle was emphasized very strongly by the Lord himself on one occasion in Matthew 6:33. What is my priority? Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. These things are what are listed in the context from verse 25 on down to verse 33. All the things that are the details of life: food; clothing; and, shelter – all of which are necessary. We refer to these as logistical grace. This is what you need to function to do God's job as a soldier of Jesus Christ. So, there has to be a certain amount of logistical grace from God to provide those essentials. He says, "I'm going to do that."

"His kingdom and His righteousness" refers to Bible doctrine – building a spiritual maturity structure in your soul as a basis for serving God. The only way to do that is through being taught the Word of God. Doctrine is one's priority in life, and it gives you freedom from being a slave to things. If you make doctrine the priority, you will never be a slave to things, and you will never have the experience in this respect that the apostle Paul was so concerned about. Paul said, "I am really concerned (really uneasy) that I could stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and be embarrassed. Embarrassed by what? Embarrassed by failure to rise to what he knew.

**Mary and Martha**

Another all-time great example of the priority of doctrine over material things is in Luke 10 – the experience of the two sisters, Mary and Martha, on the occasion when Jesus visited them. Luke 10:38: "Now as they were traveling alone, Jesus and His associates, He entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home." This is Martha, whose sister is Mary, and whose brother is Lazarus. "And she had a sister called Mary, who, moreover, listening to the Lord's Words, seated at His feet. Martha was distracted with all her preparations, and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only a few things are necessary – really only one. For Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away.'"

I remind you that this little passage is not a made-up story. This is an actual historical incident. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us a very important lesson about the priority of doctrine over things. Martha valued the details of life more than she valued learning doctrine from Jesus Christ, the God-man, who of all things, was in her home. The priority on the details of life (her hospitality) led Martha to the mental attitude sin of bitterness toward her sister Mary, which you then expressed to Jesus. Martha was distracted by her lack of a mastery of the details of life. So, she chose a secondary value of a thing – hospitality. A human good service was the result. Martha was so enslaved to things that it was reasonable to her that Jesus would rebuke Mary.

That's how Satan deceives you. When you were in the midst of making things bigger in life than the knowledge of God, you don't think you're doing it. Satan is that kind of a deceiver. Martha had no idea what a terrible thing she was doing.

So, Jesus rebukes for being worried and dominated by things. He was telling her, "Martha, you lack a mastery of the details of life." He pointed out that some things in life are necessary. Yes, they did you that meal. Yes, they did need that hospitality. There's no denying that. Jesus said, "But really, only one thing is essential in life, and that's a knowledge of doctrine."

Suppose that you get a knowledge of doctrine and you don't get food, but you keep getting doctrine, and you keep growing and expanding in that grace system of perception where you can learn things if you're open to it by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. You keep growing in spiritual maturity, and you keep expanding in your Christian service. That is really divine good, but you're getting hungry and hungrier, and you still don't have food, but you keep getting doctrine. Let's take it to its extreme: you've got lots of doctrine, and no food, and you die.

What terrible thing happens? You go to heaven enriched spiritually with great treasures and rewards for all eternity. So, how have you been injured by pursuing the Word of God above food? Yes, the food is important, but the supremely important thing is the knowledge of the Word of God. Martha's hospitality would soon be gone and forgotten, but Mary's knowledge of doctrine is her permanent good possession. That is why Mary, of all the people, including the apostles, was the one person who understood that Jesus Christ was going to be resurrected. She anointed Him for his burial, and she anticipated His return. This woman knew her doctrine. Martha should have joined Mary at the feet of Jesus to receive His instruction, and then they should have taken a break, and everybody pitched in to make the meal.

**The Importance of Doctrine**

Why is doctrines so important? Word of God gives us some insights from the Old Testament Scriptures in Solomon's book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes 5:14 says this: as to why doctrine should be supreme: "When those riches were lost through a bad investment, and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him." This is one of the things I've been trying to tell you. Remember that poignant phrase to the rich man: "Now whose shall be these things which you have secure?" Those of you who have managed to be blessed and prospered and have accumulated things, are you prepared to leave that to the people who would get their hands on it? Here, Solomon had a spendthrift son, and he is going to blow the riches (the investments) so that even the parent had nothing to support him or the son. The point is that any detail of life can be removed in an instant.

Look at Ecclesiastes 5:15: "And he had come naked from his mother's womb. So he will return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand." Did you notice that? He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he what? Carry in his hand. It didn't say that he would take nothing from the fruit of his labor. Everything that he has invested in God's work is going to go right up there with him. There will be treasures stored in heaven, and it will be eternal reward. He will leave only material things behind for his heirs to spend. You can't take your details beyond this life.

**The Rich Young Fool**

Just to remind you once more, Luke 12:16-20 give you that parable of the rich fool that makes that so clear. So, we must have something permanent in the soul which is not subject to removal by disorientation or death.

**Job**

One of the great examples of a man who had something in the soul so that he was not destroyed when he lost the details of life was certainly Job. In In Job 1:13-19, we're told how Job, in one day, lost his cattle; lost his camels; lost his servants; lost his sheep; and then, worst of all, lost his seven children. Job's reaction to the loss is an inspiration to us to this very day because he was not surrounded by sympathetic people who were putting their arm around him to help reinforce him in this time of his great tragedy. Job 1:20-22: "Then Job arose, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground and worshiped." He expressed sorrow as they did in that culture: "And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

That is a gutsy statement. Not every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the Christian community can really say that and mean it: "The Lord gave. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." But Joe had his priorities straight. The book of Job is probably the first book written of the Old Testament – one of the oldest books. The degree of doctrine in this book is amazing, and it reflects what Joe knew. He was no dummy when it came to the truth of God. Job had divine viewpoint, so he saw all of his losses for what they were – details only. There is nothing more important than doctrine and positive volition to it. That is the only way to gain God's perspective on the details of life. The Word of God will help you keep things straight. Details can be lost, but details can be replaced. You leave that with God, and you pursue the top priority of the divine viewpoint in mind.

Job found out by experience that the details of life, once lost, can be replaced, because God replaced everything that he had: doubled. He had double the amount of cattle, camels, servants, and sheep. But he only game him seven children. He did not double seven children, for which Mrs Job was happy I'm sure. But did he have double children. Yes, isn't that interesting? The seven were in heaven. So, he still had them. God gave him seven more, and had double children as well as everything else.

But his troubles really deepened. It tested his mastery of the details of life in an enormous way. Finally, he got hit physically by Satan. He had boils around all over his body. He had three friends who came to comfort him, and they ended up accusing him of some sin. His wife suggested, in Job 2:9, that he just kill himself – curse God and kill himself? She was not too good on doctrine. Job's mental attitude, under severe stress, was to rebuke his wife. So, in Job 2:10, he responds to her question, "Do you still hold your integrity? Curse God and die."

Verse 10: "But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity.' In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." There we enter the sovereignty of God as well as the details of life. Job says, "I know the doctrine of sovereignty. I don't know why God is doing this to me. I don't know why He added this burden to me. I don't why he made my life and my job harder by doing this. But I don't have to know. I just know that He is in charge, and His grace will carry me through, and I am going to keep on keeping on with Him.

So, Job should be applauded because he did not repeat the Eden syndrome of listening to his wife in spiritual things when she was off base, and thus leading the family into spiritual disaster, as so often happens today. If Job had been a slave of the details of life, he certainly would have broken down the strain of such losses. But he had a lasting spiritual maturity structure in his soul because he had learn the Word. He was content whether he had the details of life or whether he lost them. Doctrine had set his affections on the things above, as this Colossians 3:1-2 tells us to set our affections. Occupation with the details of life, people, will crowd out of your mind the Word of God, and you will move down to lower priority. It will crowd it out.

In Luke 8:14, we read, "The seed which fell among the thorns." These are the ones who heard have heard. As they go on their way, they choke with the worries and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to maturity. It will choke out that divine good production that God is so eager to bless you with.

**Ananias and Sapphira**

In the Bible, we also have some very sobering examples of what happens when you have people who do not have a mastery of the details of life. One of the classic ones is found the Acts 5, the situation of Ananias and Sapphira, a husband and wife team. Most of the problems of the mastery of details of life occur for a husband and wife. And if neither one of them has a mastery of the details of life, then they egg each other on to go for the lower priorities, so that consumes them.

In Acts 5, we read, "But a certain man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property." They had just seen Barnabas, up in Acts 4:47, sell a piece of property, and he brought the money to the local church: "He who owned a tract of land sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." Here, at this time, the Christians were pooling their resources. They were under the gun of the society in which they lived. They were hated. They were being abused and persecuted, even by the religious leaders. One of the ways you persecute people is by making it impossible for them to do business, and to cut off the supply of their funds. In Russia, they would take your identification card from you so that you couldn't buy things. You couldn't go to the grocery store. They could starve you out which just that one of little act, because if they sold you things at the store, you were liable for criminal action yourself.

However, the Christians pooled their resources to get around that problem. That's why Barnabas brought this money and said, "Here, put it in the treasury. This will help carry us through. Of course, what do you think the Christians did? They said, "Thank you, brother Barnabas." And they rejoiced. They were happy for this gift. Barnabas himself was happy that they were happy.

Well, Ananias and Sapphira watched this, and their lust for approbation (for praise) got hold of them. So, they sold a piece of property. They had lots of property, and they kept back some of the price for himself with his wife's full knowledge. Even this poor man didn't have a wife who was oriented in the Word of God, because he probably hadn't let her into spiritual things, and directed her so that she would be learning the Word of God (that he her true teacher), and opened the doors of knowledge with her full knowledge so that she was no help to him: "And bringing a portion of it, they laid it at the apostles' feet.

They sold the property. And because they did not have a mastery of the details of life (they got such a good price), they just couldn't part with the whole thing. So, they brought some of it. What was their problem? They were worshiping the idol of greed. That's when you can't let go of your money, and you could let go and be just as well off with the surplus you have, it's greed, and you're worshiping that idol.

Well, these people still have plenty, but they couldn't give it all up. Why? Well, they wanted the praise. They said, "We'll give a portion of it. We'll get the praise, and we will enjoy the rest of it ourselves."

Peter points out a principle to them: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Ananias though, "Ooh, I thought I was lying to all those dudes down at the local church. Well, you never lie to people. You're always dealing with God, and sin is always against the Lord, and you're always lying to Him. He was keeping keep back some of the price of the land. Here's the principle: "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own (private ownership capitalism)? After it was sold, was it not under your control? You had the money to do what you wanted with it. Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God?"

They could have come and said, we're giving this gift for the communo-treasury. That would have been all right. But they implied that they had done exactly what Barnabas had done – given it all. Therein was the problem, and it was their lack of a master of the details of life that drove them to that. So, it was not wrong for them to have a lot of money, and they were free to do with it as they pleased. But their mental attitude greed and lust for praise is where the sin came in. So, their mental attitude led them to deceive the congregation, and thereby to be lying to the Holy Spirit.

"As he has heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came upon all who heard of it." Now, that was a morning service they didn't soon forget: "Folks, I just sold a piece of property, and I'm giving all the money to our offering box. It's my great privilege and great pleasure ...," and down he goes. The people said, "Ananias, are you all right? Ushers, he has fainted." No he hasn't. He's dead. Boy, am I glad that God doesn't work like that today. Mental attitude led them to deceive the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit took Ananias to heaven. Now whose money was it to spend? Thereby, the Spirit of God prevented Satan from using this hypocrisy to destroy the local church ministry. He didn't allow the sin of a lack of mastery of the details of life to corrode the rest of the congregation.

**Trying to Make Deals with God**

This is an example of the sin unto death. They really were trying to make a deal with God: prominence for a little money; and, praise for a little money. That's why we have to be careful, while we are grateful for what people do, and for what people of means do. We don't want to hurt them by moving them toward a wrong attitude by our praise of them beyond a certain appreciation and of recognition that they have done a right and a good thing, because their praise comes from God, and their blessing will come from God. Nevertheless, we must be grateful, and it's right that we express that. If you are dealing with a mature Christian, it rolls off. He knows where the money can. He knows to whom the glory goes. The Christians are still trying to make deals with God like these people did, and make various promises of good behavior and the good things they're going to do when their ship comes in – trying to make a deal with God.

There's only one deal that God makes with us. So, if you've been making make deals with God, this is the only one that you can make. It's in Hebrews 13:5: "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have. For He Himself said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." Logistical grace will always be there for you to survive, and then he will give you luxuries perhaps over that. Let your character be free from the love of money. He is not saying, "Do not let yourself be free of money." It is never that – the more the better. But let your character be free from being attached to that. Be content with what you have, because God's going to stand by and carry you through.

That being the case, why can't you let go of that surplus? He's already given you more than you need, and He says, "I'm going to always take care of you." It should be easy enough to do. You can make that deal with Him. If you have a mastery of the details of life, then you have just about everything in life that is ever going to be of value to you.

In Philippians 4:9, we have this verse: "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus."

Well, the story gets worse: "The young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him." The preacher tries to pick up the sermon where he left off. "Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened." So, she didn't attend church with him. Aha! That should be a lesson to wives who do not attend church with her husbands: "And Peter responded to her and said (she comes out where the saints are gathered), 'Tell me whether you sold the land for such-and-such a price.' And she said, 'Yes, that was the price' (and she smiled). Then Peter said to her, 'Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of God to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well.' She fell immediately at his feet; breathed her last; and, the young men came in and found her dead. And they carried her out, and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things."

It is serious business not to have a mastery of the details of life, because it'll cause you to be tempted; to be deceitful; to be hypocritical; and, to lie to God. Worst of all, is when you have a husband and wife teaming up to do evil – not one or the other, who could have said, "Wait a minute. This is not a good thing for us to do," and to express a word of caution.

**The Widow with Two Small Coins**

Another great example of the blessings of having a mastery of the details of life is in Luke 21. This is the story, and again a historical event, of the widow. The Lord Jesus Christ is sitting at the temple. He has been discussing the things of the Word of God, and there is a place at the Jewish temple where people came and put their offerings in. In Luke 21:1, Jesus is sitting there. Interestingly enough, if you look up into the two verses before in Luke 20:46-47, Jesus had observed the scribes and the deceitfulness of the scribes of doing what Ananias and Sapphira did in trying to make a public front, and trying to gain a public image. Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the marketplace, and cheap seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets; who devour widows' houses and, for appearance sake, offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

**Hypocritical Religious Leaders**

So, here are these hypocritical religious leaders that Jesus has just been talking about. One of the things that they liked to do for appearance sake was walk up and put money into the offering box there at the temple, and make a great show of doing it: "So, He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw a certain poor widow put in two small copper coins." These were two small ('leptos'). These were probably not worth more than a penny in our frame of reference: "He said, truly, I say to you this poor widow, put in more than all of them. For, they all out of their surplus put into the offering, but she, out of her poverty, put in all that she had to live on."

Jesus was contrasting her with the religious leaders who were filled with their desire for praise and for things, as we saw up in verse 46 and 47. Clearly, the scribes were slaves to the details of life. Here were the clergy going by, along with the rich people, dropping their sums into the offering box, and probably some of them were large sums. But the point was that while they took great pride in that, even though they had robbed widows, and they had done things that were dishonest to get that money, they always hide from whatever they stole from people. But the widow dropped in less than a penny. But, by contrast to them, it was far more. Jesus said that in the sight of God, she would receive greater treasure in heaven because it was all she had. It was her living. Whereas, the rich people had plenty left over. So, while they could take pride, they should remember (and here's a clue to us): "what I give, I must give in the frame of reference of what I keep."

The word "poor" here in Luke 21:3 ("this poor widow") looks is the Greek word ("ptochos"). "Ptochos" means "poverty-stricken." This very same word is used in Revelation 3:17, talking about the carnal Laodicean in Christians, where it say, "Because you say I'm rich, I have become wealthy (and they were), and I have need of nothing, and they didn't. And you do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This widow was poverty-stricken, and she was a blessing to God, and all those around her, with what she gave to God. These Laodicean Christians were giving out of their wealth. Jesus says, "You've given, and you have a lot of things, but you're dirt poor." They were dirt poor.

How could that be? Well, because she was rich in treasures in heaven, and they were poor in the treasures they would receive. She was not leaning on the details of life, but on the Word of God. The religious leaders really gave little, and the rich people really gave little, in comparison to what they kept money. Money was their security, and they wanted plenty of it. The principle of God's truth here is that the less the details of life mean to you, the more you will give to the work of God.

How can I keep from falling into this trap of being a slave of the details of life? The apostle Paul had to face that, and he gives us some instruction on that in Philippians 4. He had to face not being dependent upon the details of life, particularly here in terms of money. Paul is imprisoned in Rome. He has received help financially from the Philippian church through Epaphroditus, who has brought the money. In Philippians 4:10-12, Paul says, "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now, at last, you have received your concern for me. Indeed you were concern before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from what I learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry; both of having abundance and suffering need.

Paul says, "I have learned. I know. These are words that are explanatory of a mental attitude that Paul head toward the details of life, because he got it from doctrine. He had learned what is important from the Word of God. He had learned the promises of God's care, so therefore he could depend upon that. You don't get mastery by hoping, or trying to psych yourself, into not caring about what you have. This is a spiritual development to say, "I am trusting God to care for me. And when His work needs something, and I have surplus, it's going to get it." I'm not going to sit around and think what percentage I'm going to give. I'm going to do it because it needs to be done.

How do you do that? Well, it comes from learning the Word of God, which you believe. It is stored in your human spirit, then it cycles back into the mentality of your soul, and you act on divine viewpoint decisions. Paul knew because he had been instructed in the Word of God. He knew that the details don't bring satisfaction, no matter how many or magnificent they are, but a right mental attitude toward your things – that will bring you satisfaction. If you know how to hold things lightly, you'll find great satisfaction in them. The grace system of perception enables us to learn doctrine. It supplies the information so that we can be preoccupied with Christ, and not with details. Then we can gain, as Paul said, and it's great. Then we can lose, and it's OK, and we aren't suffering any kind of spiritual or mental breakdown. Paul's position was: "It's nice that you have supplied me with these funds, and I appreciate it, and I need them. But I know how to live in prosperity. But I also know how to live in poverty. If I don't have it, then I change gears, and I do what is necessary. In his case, it was going back to his trade.

Americans are just contented people. They have everything in life. The reason for that, in large measure, is because Americans are slaves to the details of life. They have no lasting pleasure in the things they possess, and what they possess is not enough. They always want more. That is characteristic of the sin nature.

Those who do not have a master of details of life will never come to the place in life where they say, "Boy, I've got enough now. Now I'm going to concentrate on using it in God's service and in my Christian service." You never get to that place unless you have a mastery of the details of life.

God says that we are to avoid this trap, and to be content with what God provides. We are surrounded in our culture by advertising which is motivated by Satan to make us discontented with what we have. Your children watch cartoons that are geared with advertising to motivate them to be discontented with the cereal you give them. It is perfectly good cereal: "I don't want that stuff. I want Mr. Godzilla Gorilla Loops, the newest thing on the market, and they're sugar-coated, and they're terrible for me. That's the kind of stuff I love to eat. And I don't want this granola stuff. Our children learn how to not have a mastery details of life, and you need to teach them too.

Resentment over being denied the details is going to lead to mental attitude sins of all kinds, and it's going to ruin the enjoyment of what you do have. You get yourself worried sick over cultivating the right people now to get things you want: getting into the right social groups; accumulating the right social status symbols; and, competing for honors. You go from misery to misery. God is not against our having fun. He is against our being in love with details greater than being in love with Him; His Word; and, His mission for you.

You can enjoy the details if doctrine stands first in your scale of values and priorities. If happiness depends on certain things, people, pleasures, or circumstances, it's obvious that you can lose those. And you'll always keep worrying about losing them if that's where your happiness lies. If doctrine is secondary, you will also come to the point where you get bored with all the things you have. After a while, it's not fun to have all those things. After a while, you will get bored.

**King Solomon**

The only means for permanent soul satisfaction is what King Solomon finally arrived at after a life of his own that was squandered in pursuing all kinds of things. He, who had such great divine viewpoint wisdom, blew it, and lost his mastery of the details of life. He comes to the end of his life in Ecclesiastes 12:13. Here it is. He says, "My life has been a bunch of air. I've blown off things. I've built things. I got interested in girls. I got a lot of girls. I married 700 of them, and kept 300 of them in reserve to replace those that got worn out, I guess. But I've done it all. I had a great time, a wonderful time, and it's nothing.

So, he comes to the end, and he comes back to the divine viewpoint wisdom that he had to begin: "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God, and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person." What good information. Fear God (respect His Holiness, and learn His Word) and then you better believe it.

There will was always be a deficiency in the Christian who lacks a priority of life on doctrine no matter what details he possesses. God tried to warn His people Israel of this. Moses particularly took this to heart as he wrote his final document to the people before he died. We closed with the admonition of Moses.

In Deuteronomy 8:4, Moses reminds them that in the years that they wandered in the wilderness (that 40-year period), your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these 40 years."

Drop down to Deuteronomy 8:11: "Beware, lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you this day (doctrine). Lest, when you have eaten, and are satisfied, and have built good houses, and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out from the house of slavery."

I can testify to many sad examples over my four decades at Berean Church, where I've seen humble-pie people with nothing coming into our congregation; get on to the track of doctrines; and, suddenly find themselves prospered materially in big ways by God, only then to become slaves of the details of life that God had given them, instead of being a master over them, and then see them drift off from the things of God; move off from our congregation; and, get off to living the good life. And to this day, their lives are a spiritual disaster. That's always a problem. Moses told the Jews, "You have a God who is eager to prosper you. Don't make the mistake of forgetting where it came from, or what He intends for you to do with it."

Verse 15: "He led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water. He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. In the wilderness, He fed you manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you, and he might test you to do good for you in the end. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand has made me this wealth.'"

I'll give you another variation of that that I've heard from Christians sometime who have come into wealth: "God knows who to trust with His money." When I hear that, I know I'm listening to a voice that has no mastery of the details of life. That is exactly the arrogance that Moses says, "Don't fall into saying, 'My power and strength has made this wealth for me.'"

Verse 18: "But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you the power to make wealth." He could scramble your brain cells tomorrow, and you wouldn't make another thing. He's giving you the power to make wealth; to make your mind work; and, to do all this: "That He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers as it is this day. You shall come about, if you ever forget the Lord your God, and go after other gods and serve them (like the god of money) and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish." Indeed, indeed, indeed. Failure to have mastery of the details of life is a dead-end street, ending in disillusionment, selfishness, greed, and unhappiness. May that never be true of we who know better.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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