

Idolatry of Selfishness

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Over the past several years we have emphasized the all importance of the first commandment—putting nothing before our Father. Always putting Him first in our lives. He told us in Exodus 20, the first commandment:

“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

When Christ walked the earth and was asked, what is the first commandment, we won't turn there, but that's in Mark 12 and the Greek word for *first* is *protos* where we get the English word “prototype”. It means “the foremost in importance”. So, this lawyer asked Him, what is the foremost commandment, the most important commandment. Of course, Christ answered and said:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength—this is the first or foremost commandment.”

As Gordon mentioned in the sermonette, we have emphasized that because we want to, without reservations put our Father first and not get distracted going to the left or to the right. Notice what is afoot today. It was an astounding article for the New York Times, of all places, to publish. They published a guest essay on Friday—a week ago yesterday—the start of Passover and on Good Friday, by an author name Shalom Auslander. I'm assuming by his first name and the content and context of the essay that he is of Jewish descent. He insisted in this article—this is in the New York Times, the most popular newspaper in the country—that during this Passover we should stop paying attention to God. If you can imagine that.

*In this time of war and violence, of oppression and suffering,
I propose we pass over something else—God.*

That during the Passover season, we should pass over God Himself. He later claimed that God is—I'm using the words he used—“*hateful and full of brutality*”. He then equated in that article, which just blows my mind, what Yehovah did to the Egyptians with what the Russians are doing to the Ukrainians today. Quoting again:

If He (referring to God Almighty) were a mortal, the God of Jews, the God of Christians, the God of Muslims, would be dragged to the Hague.

For those who don't remember the Hague, it is the International Court of Justice known as the World Court and is located in the Hague Netherlands. It is the main judicial organ of the United Nations. So, he is saying God Almighty should be dragged before a court of men because of His brutality and hatefulness. He goes on to say that humanity emulates God in the worst possible way.

And yet we praise Him, we emulate Him, we implore our children to be like Him. Perhaps now, as missiles rain down and the dead are discovered in mass graves, it is a good time to stop emulating this hateful God.

Can you imagine? Going on:

Perhaps we can stop extolling His brutality. Perhaps now is a good time to teach our children to pass over God and be as unlike Him as possible.

Auslander said. Then he gave other examples, allegedly proving how God is so hateful.

God threw Adam out of Eden for eating an apple. This is called being heavy handed.

He also mentioned the plight of Eve.

Cursing all women for eternity because of Eve's choices.

This is, he says, how “mean” and “hateful” Yehovah is. It’s a vomit inducing article and portrays how the world is coming, not only in many cases to ignore God, but in cases like this to actually hate God. It also tells us how little people actually know about what the Bible says. We who study the Bible know that, if you would read your Bible, everything this man says is absolutely not true. At the most fundamental level, when you think about it, what is going on here? This author is putting himself before the Most High God. He is putting his thoughts, his desires, his opinions, and his beliefs before what is recorded in God’s Word. This essay shows the existence of a growing hatred of Yehovah.

I remember in the 1960’s, if you were alive back then and were paying attention, there was a movement called the “God Is Dead” movement. The idea promoted in colleges and the intelligentsia of the day, the idea that belief in God was no longer possible. The belief in God was meaningless in the modern world and that fulfillment could be found in secular life. You didn’t have to believe in mysticism or a God Who doesn’t exist. That was the “God is Dead” back then. But now in the 2020’s, there is an effort to kill God. To take Him before the Hague and put Him on trial and if He were a human, you could kill Him.

We also see in this article how much the media hates God Almighty. Why would they allow an essay like this to be printed, especially at this time of year other than to attack a belief in a Supreme Being. That’s exactly what the New York Times was doing by allowing this ridiculous article to be printed. Do you think they would print an article that praised God Almighty? Of course not; they wouldn’t do that. Just as there is a growing hatred of those who worship Yehovah—God Almighty—there is a growing hatred of God Himself; Yehovah Himself. As we are going to see in a little bit, it’s the same as it was in the days of Noah.

Why are humans growing in their hatred towards Almighty God? I remember the first time I heard Mr. Armstrong on the radio in 1964. I was a dirt-poor, graduate student in college. He often mentioned the prime characteristics of human nature. He gave four of them and he repeated it over and over, time after time, in sermons and on radio and on television. He would say, *vanity, jealousy, lust and greed*. I remember that like it was yesterday, hearing that over the radio, describing human nature. When you think about it, what is the underlying evil behind vanity, jealousy, lust and greed? When you give it some thought, the underlying evil is selfishness. Selfishness leads to vanity, to lust, to greed, to jealousy. Selfishness is behind that.

In Colossians 3, Paul is writing to people who are converted and in verse 5, it adds to our understanding of this underlying evil, of selfishness. I'm going to read this out of the NIV. Paul is saying to converted Christians in Colossi but also to us today:

Colossians 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature [then he lists what belongs to our human nature]: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (NIV)*

We all know that putting anything before our Father is idolatry. Here we see that if we have or exhibit the sin of greed, that is indeed idolatry. Why is greed idolatry? For the same reason that hating Yehovah is idolatry. It's putting the self before God Almighty. Anything we put in front of God Almighty is idolatry. How can we put our Father first and then take for ourselves? How can we put our Father first when we want to do away with Him and violate the very first commandment, as the world is attempting to do today? Selfishness is the underlying cause of humanity's failures and problems because humanity wants to take for the self and acquire to the self and is always looking out for the self. The word *selfishness* by its very definition, puts the self-first, even before the one Who created us. If we put ourselves before the One Who created us, that my friends, is idolatry. So, the title of the sermon is:

The Idolatry of Selfishness

We are going to see that if we exhibit selfishness, we are de facto committing idolatry. We're going to have seven points today. In the first point, we want to define our terms.

1. What is selfishness?

Let me quote from the New Oxford American Dictionary: "Of a person, action or motive; lacking consideration for others; concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure."

Webster's Dictionary defines selfishness this way: "Concerned excessively or exclusively with one's self. Seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure or wellbeing without regard for others."

The English words “selfish” and “selfishness” are not found in the Bible; they are not there. I did a little bit of research and the English word for “selfish” was first written down in 1693 in a book by a man named Hacket. He was writing about the life of Archbishop Williams and that is the first recorded use of the English word “selfishness”. It is reportedly coined by the Presbyterians in the 1630’s; they began to use it and then it migrated into our English language. Even though the word “selfish” or “selfishness” is not found in the Bible, our Father’s Word has much to say about that subject.

So, we have defined our terms, now let’s look at the second point in our understanding of the idolatry of selfishness.

2. Selfishness began with Satan.

Time wise, the first recorded incident of selfishness came from Satan himself. Let’s go to Isaiah 14:12. This obviously occurs before human beings existed. The first recorded incident of selfishness coming upon a created being.

Isaiah 14:12 *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *Lucifer* is found in Strong’s #1984 and is the Hebrew word *halal* and it means “to shine, hence to make a show or to boast”. His very name means “to make a show or a boast”, which is one of the definitions of selfishness—looking to the self. Going on in verse 13.

13) For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, [notice the selfishness] I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (KJV)

This is a perfect example of the definition of *selfish*. Seeking one’s own advantage, one’s own pleasure, one’s own wellbeing, without regard to others. Let’s go to the other group of scriptures we traditionally go to when looking at Satan—Ezekiel 28:11 out of the NIV, it’s a little clearer.

Ezekiel 28:11 *The word of the LORD came to me:*

12) “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: [the king of Tyre being a type of Satan] ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; [that’s not talking about Adam and Eve but of Satan, the serpent] every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. (NIV)

So, we see that Satan is a created being—a spirit being.

14) You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. (NIV)

Very exalted position for a created spirit being.

15) You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

16) Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. (NIV)

Notice the beginning of verse 17.

17) Your heart became proud on account of your beauty ... (NIV)

So, we see that a spirit being was the first to allow selfishness to dominate his character, to dominate his behavior. This was at some point prior to the existence of the physical universe and all of us.

That leads to the third point as we come down to the existence of human beings.

3. Selfishness is a fundamental characteristic of human beings.

Apart from God, apart from God's Holy Spirit, selfishness is a fundamental characteristic of all humans and it started in the Garden of Eden. Let's go back to Genesis 3:1. I know we've read this many, many times and it's very familiar, but let's read it from the standpoint of the exhibition of selfishness and selfishness creeping into the minds and the lives of human beings. Brand new human beings and notice what happens.

Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent [we know that is Satan] was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

2) And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4) And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: (KJV)

That is the first recorded lie, time wise, in the Bible. Verse 5 out of the NLT.

5) God knows that your eyes will be open when you eat it. You will become just like God knowing everything both good and evil. (NLT)

So what Satan is telling Adam and Eve is that you can get what you do not have. I'm giving you the opportunity to get what you don't have and what you don't have looks awfully good and tastes awfully good. What you don't have is going to make you wise. You don't have it, but I'm going to give you the opportunity to take it for yourself. That is the heart of selfishness. Verse 6 back to the King James.

6) And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired [taking for the self] to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (KJV)

We know the rest of that story. One of the lessons to be learned from that is that once selfishness takes hold of a human's mind, from that point on, that human will start turning away from God Almighty. That's one of the lessons of Adam and Eve. Once you allow selfishness to come into your mind, it will automatically take you away from God because you begin putting yourself before God Almighty.

Selfishness was also a cause for the coming of the flood. Let's go to Genesis 6:5. This selfishness is just a theme throughout the evil of mankind. This out of the NIV.

Genesis 6:5 *The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (NIV)*

Their thoughts were self-serving; their thoughts were, "How can I satisfy myself? How can I get what I want? How can I obtain what I don't currently have?"

6) The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

7) So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.

8) But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (NIV)

Let's go down to verse 13.

13) So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. [Because of the nature of people] I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. (NIV)

You see that man is wanting to take from others and willing to take it by violence, all because of the self. Man wanted something that other people have and if they won't give it to them, man will take it by violence or by subterfuge or by lying or by cheating or by whatever means we can. Let me read from the Complete Works of Josephus, about this time. I happen to have the 1977 edition.

The posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe and to have an entire regard to virtue for seven generations. But in the process of time, they were perverted and forsook the practices of their forefathers and did neither pay those honors to God which were appointed them. Nor had they any concern to do justice to men. But for what degree of zeal, they had formerly shown to virtue, they now showed by their actions a double degree of wickedness, whereby they made God to be their enemy.

Just like what we read in the introduction, in that New York Times article. God is my enemy, I don't want to follow God, I don't want my children to be like God, I don't anything to do with God, God is evil, He is mean, He is nasty, He is my enemy. Just as with Adam and Eve, obeying Yehovah interfered with humans doing what they wanted to do. At the core of humans doing what they want to do, is *selfishness*. Taking to the self—selfishness has continued unabated down through history.

Let's go to the time of Daniel, Daniel 4 and we will begin in verse 24 where Daniel is interpreting a dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had. Has anything changed between the flood and now in Daniel's day? Has anything changed or is it the same? Daniel is now talking to Nebuchadnezzar and interpreting the dream that he had.

Daniel 4:24 *This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High [God Almighty, Yehovah, the God of the Old Testament], which is come upon my lord the king:*

25) That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, [until a lesson has to be learned] till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. (KJV)

Until you understand, you are subservient to God Almighty and that His will comes before your will.

26) And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

27) Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility. (KJV)

If you will obey God and get your mind off yourself and to serve your subjects, it will go well with you.

28) All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29) At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. (KJV)

Let's see if he learned anything from Daniel's message.

30) The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? (KJV)

Great humility here, great example of giving God Almighty the credit?

31) While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32) And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. (KJV)

It is not your glory, it is not your honor, it is not your might or desire that counts.

33) The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. (KJV)

So, we see from Noah to Nebuchadnezzar, selfishness ruled the earth. Then we're told that selfishness will continue to the end of this age. Let's go to Matthew 24:37, a very familiar verse. Christ is saying, from Satan to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Nebuchadnezzar, to His present day and on into the future until the end of time. This applies to man's rule on earth.

Matthew 24:37 *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (KJV)*

This tells us that selfishness will continue until the Father and His Son come back to this earth and establish their government and establish true religion on the face of this earth. We see today, this prophecy coming true right before our eyes. If you've studied World War II history, Adolph Hitler started World War II by first taking Austria, then taking Czechoslovakia and France and Great Britain finally drew a line over Poland and he invaded Poland because he wanted what he called *lebensraum*, "living room" for the Germanic peoples. He was willing to take from others to give his nation what he felt his nation deserved and basically what he felt he deserved.

The U.S. invaded Iraq; the alleged reason that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction which did not prove to be true. There was a lot of ego involved with that whole deal. Today Russia is attempting to take what they want by force and violence and we are witness to that, almost in real time today. Humans want to take what they don't have and if they have to use force or violence, they are perfectly willing to do that.

I think Solomon summed it up best, so let's go to Ecclesiastes. We know Solomon is writing near the end of his life and had learned some very painful lessons. He started off with a humble spirit and then got off track and in Ecclesiastes he has some profound statements to make.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. (KJV)*

The New Living Translation says this:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 *History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. (NLT)*

The philosophy and author, George Santayana, born in 1863 and died in 1952 had the famous statement.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Nothing new under the sun. Now look at Ecclesiastes 9:3.

Ecclesiastes 9:3 *This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. (KJV)*

They go to the grave. He said, man's heart is filled with evil which includes a gross amount of selfishness. Putting the self before God Almighty, putting the self before your neighbor, your brother, your family; that is gross selfishness. The utter selfishness we see today has been occurring since the beginning of mankind.

That leads us to the fourth point.

4. Selfishness was a fundamental reason why Christ had to die.

Selfish mankind, evil mankind, sinful mankind, necessitated the Son of God having to die to wash away that selfishness and evil. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 15:1. We talked about 1 Corinthians a little while back regarding the Passover. Paul is writing to the church that allowed sin to be in their midst. They were perverting the keeping of the Passover. They were perverting hair length and confusion between men and women and a whole bunch of other things. So, Paul is writing and correcting them. This out of the NIV.

1 Corinthians 15:1 *Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, [he says I've done this, I've preached to you, I want to remind you] which you received and on which you have taken your stand.*

- 2) *By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*
3) *For what I received ... (NIV)*

Remember we talked about this before; he received it directly from Christ, he was stricken down in the road to Damascus and Christ appeared to him over a period of time and taught him directly.

- 3 continued) *... I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*
4) *that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ... (NIV)*

We have just memorialized that time very recently. Now let's go on to another writing of Paul in Galatians 1:3, establishing the fact that Christ had to die to expiate our sins—to wash them away.

Galatians 1:3 *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ ... (KJV)*

If there was a trinity, this would be the perfect place from in which to say so, but it isn't here—just the Father and the Son.

- 4) *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (KJV)*

Paul was talking about this present evil world in his day. You come 2000 years down the road and the evil in this world today is far greater than the evil in the world that he lived in. Partly because of mass communications and the ease of people having access to evil. Look at chapter 2:20.

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (KJV)*

We see in Galatians 1:4 and Galatians 2:20 that Christ gave—He didn't take—He gave Himself for the benefit of His Father's children. Think about this: He gave Himself for us before we were born and, in that sense, He gave Himself for us while we have been selfishly seeking our own desires before we were called. We were selfish, seeking our own desires and Christ had already died for us, to wipe that away. Selfishness is one of the reasons Christ had to die—to wash away those sins.

Now the fifth point in a logical follow on:

5. Selfishness is something all of us must overcome if we are going to be in the Kingdom of God.

We all want to be in the Kingdom of God but there is a big “but” there. With that in mind let’s go to Psalm 18:24. We have some facts to face as those who are walking toward the Kingdom of God, who want to attain salvation and eternal life, God has some requirements of us. God does not accept us as we are. We have to make changes. This out of the New King James and David is writing.

Psalm 18:24 *Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness ... (NKJV)*

This was written after he was delivered by God Almighty from Saul.

24 continued) ... According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. (NKJV)

David was innocent and Saul was after him, trying to kill him.

25) With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

26) With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

27) For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks.

28) For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. (NKJV)

Wipe away the darkness, and you will save the humble, but if someone is haughty in look, word or deed, they will be brought low. Sometimes, as this says, we’re dark to our haughtiness, we’re blind to the fact that we can be arrogant or selfish. Being close to our Father, David says—*Yehovah my God will enlighten my darkness*—being close to our Father opens our eyes so we can see ourselves as He sees us. Not as we would like to paint ourselves but as He sees us.

With that in mind let’s go to the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 6:9. Back to the church at Corinth, Paul is writing to a church that allowed sin in their midst and they had all kinds of problems and sin. They were spiritual babies, spiritually immature. I’ll read this out of the New King James.

1 Corinthians 6:9 *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? [God is not going to take you as you are] Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,*

10) nor thieves, nor covetous [those who take for themselves], nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)

There are many people who just don’t read this scripture. They don’t want to face the scripture or look at the scripture, but that’s what it says. The Greek word for *covetous* is Strong’s #4123, it has an interesting definition. It means “desiring more; that is eager for

gain; to get to the self.” William Sloane Coffin Jr. who was an American chaplain and a social activist born in 1924 and died in 2006 said this, a profound statement:

Love measures our stature. The more we love the bigger we are.

Notice this last sentence.

There is no smaller package in the world than that of a man all wrapped up in himself.

How true is that. Now let’s go back to Ephesians 5 and see Paul again writing about this subject. Ephesians 5:5, this will be the only verse we look at. Paul is reminding us about covetousness; taking for the self.

Ephesians 5:5 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous [that’s the same Greek word we read in 1 Corinthians 6:10; desiring more and eager for gain] man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (KJV)*

We are told that *covetousness is the heart of selfishness and covetousness is idolatry*. We are putting something before God Almighty; we’re putting ourselves before God Almighty. If we are going to be in the Kingdom of God, selfishness is something we all need to overcome. We just must, if we are going to be part of God’s Kingdom. God is not going to give eternal life to somebody who is covetous and selfish. That is not what God’s Kingdom is all about.

6. Let’s look at some ways that selfishness can manifest itself in our lives.

Sometimes—and I have been guilty of this—selfishness can creep in, in ways we do not recognize or see. Let’s ask a question. How do we spend our time? What is the motivation behind the spending of our time? Let’s go to Acts 17:21; we’re breaking into an account where Paul is traveling, preaching the gospel and visiting Athens. We’ll just read this one verse as it is an illustration of how selfishness can take over our time. Paul is talking to the Athenians.

Acts 17:21 *(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) (KJV)*

In other words, this pursuit dominated their time. They wanted to tell something new, they wanted to hear something new and there is no indication that this was something for the benefit of others but for the self. Now, with that in mind, let’s go to 2 Timothy 4:3 and see what Paul tells this young elder—he’s giving him counsel and advice through his letters. He’s warning him that there are times coming that he is going to have to face.

2 Timothy 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts [their own selfishness] shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (KJV)*

What this tells us is that these people who do this, their motive is to get for the self. When you have an itch, you scratch it. You're taking care of yourself. When you have an itch to satisfy your lusts then you go after teachers that satisfy your lusts, that tell you what you want to hear. Paul is telling Timothy to watch out for that. The time is coming and it's even worse today than back then. Our judge, who is Jesus Christ—we know the Father turned judgment over to the Son—watches us, how we spend our time. Is it spent helping others? Is it spent serving others? Is it spent doing good for others? Or is it spent to satisfy the self. We'll get to Matthew 25 in a minute about the sheep and the goats. There is a reckoning of satisfying the self, versus following God and obeying the first two commandments.

How do we spend our time? Another question, what is the focus of our conversation? Is it to tell others what is important to us? Is it to tell others how we feel and that's important to us? Or does our conversation seek to serve others? I get involved all the time. People calling on the phone and they have some new idea or something and it's some coming to us and saying, if you will do this, then I'll help you out here. It's like, what is your motive, what's the purpose here? Philippians 2:3 is an interesting scripture when you read it out of the NLT. We've read this many times out of the King James but the NLT has an interesting translation of it. It gets to the heart of what we are talking about today.

Philippians 2:3 *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (NLT)*

There's a dichotomy here. There's something that is 180 degrees apart. One is going the way of Satan and exalting the self and being selfish, trying to impress others and the other is being humble as Jesus Christ was when He came to his earth and came for the very purpose of serving others. So, we have to ask ourselves, do we spend our time in trying to serve others or do we spend our time in trying to satisfy ourselves? Christ watches to see what we do.

Another question in this subject is, what is the motivation for our actions for our words? What is behind it? At this time of year, as we approach the Passover and should continue on, we need to always ask ourselves:

“What is my motivation for doing what I say or doing what I do?”

In Acts 8 we see a perfect example of wrong motivation from someone who is getting involved with this new movement that Peter was preaching about. Look at Acts 8:14 out of the New King James and ask yourself what is the motivation of this individual who is going to be spoken about?

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

15) who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16) For as yet He [the New King James says He, it should be "it"] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18) And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

19) saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (NKJV)

God Almighty and His Son gave Peter discernment and in verse 20, Peter said:

20) But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

21) You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. (NKJV)

Looking back—I've been an Elder for forty-eight years—over that time period in the church, there were dedicated men who sacrificed and served God Almighty and Jesus Christ and yet there were men who followed this example that we just read about. I've witnessed similar behavior. Efforts to climb the ladder of power without dedication to serving the brethren. I remember a man, after being ordained to what was called back then Pastor rank—it's not in the Bible—but it was a classification within the Worldwide Church of God and he said, "I am right on schedule to be where I want to be." That tells you something about motivation, about what propels us and causes us to do the things that we do.

With that in mind, let's go to 1 Samuel 16:7 because Samuel notes what is important to Yehovah when seeking a king. Remember we are all going to be kings and priests. Revelation 5:10 tells us that. We will be kings and priests so what Samuel is noting here are qualifications to be a king in David's case. But that holds true as far as a qualification to being a king in the Kingdom of God. 1 Samuel 16:7 out of the New Living Translation.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (NLT)

That's the key. God Almighty looks at our thoughts and intentions. When we speak, when we act, when we write, Almighty God and His Son—our judge—looks at what the motivation is behind all that. We have to be ever vigilant against selfishness creeping into our lives, which means Satan creeping into our lives. Which means, once Satan creeps into our lives, we begin to turn away from our Father. Selfishness is the key that

Satan uses to get to us because once we start putting ourselves first, by definition we are turning away from God Almighty. We have to analyze ourselves and look at ourselves always to see what our motivations are.

The seventh and last point:

7. How should we behave in this selfish, selfish world?

A good way to start is, what is the opposite of selfishness, because that is what we should be seeking. You could spend pages and pages talking about this but lets' just look at three areas.

7A. We have to be giving rather than taking.

Look at Luke 6:38; this is the sermon on the Mount, I'll read it out of the New King James. This is a promise from Jesus Christ. We can take this to the bank as they say, if we have this attitude rather than a selfish attitude. Christ says, very simply and in an uncomplicated way.

Luke 6:38 *Give, and it will be given to you [it will come back to you if you give]: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.* (NKJV)

If we give, our Father and His Son will see that we are given back. Maybe not monetarily or in possessions, but we are given back something far more valuable than that. We all know John 3:16, Christ was talking to Nicodemus. The most quoted scripture in the Bible—

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

The key is, He gave His only begotten Son. When you think about it, would you give your human sons, if we have sons, to go be tortured and murdered? God Almighty gave His only begotten Son so that *whosoever believes on Him would not perish but have everlasting life*. Let's go to Matthew 25:31 and obviously the chapter before talks about conditions coming up to the end of this age that we're in right now. This verse spells out what Christ our judge is looking for.

Matthew 25:31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory [He's coming as King of kings and Lord of lords of this earth], and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:
32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, [the analogy is] as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:
33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

34) *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* (KJV)

Notice what He says.

35) *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:* (KJV)

Another act of giving.

36) *I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.* ’

37) *Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?’* (KJV)

Verse 40.

40) *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’* (KJV)

All of the above actions involve giving of one’s self; our time, our concern, our money, our interest—giving of the self. We should be as giving as the Father and His Son are giving to us; we should emulate that.

7B. We need to grow in love.

We have to grow in love. We won’t turn back for sake of time but in Leviticus 19:18 we are cautioned, even in the Old Testament that you shouldn’t bear a grudge against God’s people, *but you shall love your neighbor as yourself*. That’s been the admonition going all the way back to that time. C.S. Lewis was a British writer and was a brilliant man—an English literature professor at both Oxford University and Cambridge University. He was born in 1898 and died in 1963 and said,

“Indifference is the strongest enemy of love.”

Meaning indifference towards others, not caring about others—just focused on the self. Let’s go to Galatians 5:13 and see a scripture that tells us what we’ve been called to do. What we’ve been called into.

Galatians 5:13 *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh [in other words to be selfish], but by love serve one another.*

14) *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* (KJV)

Dr. Karl Menninger was a psychiatrist born in 1893 and died in 1990 and said something profound regarding love.

“Love cures people. Both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it.”

That is so true. Love is the opposite of selfishness.

7C. We all need to grow in humility.

We won't turn there but we know in Matthew 18, the disciples came and asked who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God? What was their motivation? It's a big selfish question. That's when Christ called a little child and set the child in front of them and said unless you change, the NIV says, *and become like little children*, you will never see the Kingdom of God. Whoever humbles himself like this little child is going to be in the Kingdom of God. Whether it is in marriage or friendships or relations with the next-door neighbor or the cashier at the grocery store, it doesn't make any difference. Giving, loving, humility, all come into play. Making others happy, making others heart sing. Rather than serving the self.

Henry Drummond was a Scottish biologist and was a writer and lecturer, born in 1851 and died in 1897. This is a quote I came upon years ago but I have always remembered this because it is so true.

“You will find as you look back upon your life, that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.”

Think about that. Mr. Armstrong used to define love as “outgoing concern” which is a pretty good definition and the opposite of selfishness.

Let's conclude now. We've seen that our Father's Word tells us that selfishness is idolatry; very clear on that. The scary thing is that if we let selfishness take a hold, it will turn us away from God Almighty, turn us away from our Creator. As we saw in the beginning, it will turn people into actually hating their Creator, wanting to kill their Creator, wanting to wish their Creator was dead because the Creator's Words interfere with their lusts and what they want to do. Let's go to Revelation 11:16 and see that. When the Father and the Son come they are not going to be welcomed with open arms because the world is going to come to hate Them and Their religion and the people that follow that religion more and more.

Revelation 11:16 *The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground and worshiped him.*

17) And they said, “We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. (NLT)

That refers to Yehovah, that is the definition of Yehovah.

18) The nations were filled with wrath, but now the time of your wrath has come. (NLT)

At the end of the age, they're going to be shaking their fists at God, they are going to be opposing God, they are going to be resisting the coming of the Father and His Son.

18 continued) ... It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets, as well as your holy people, and all who fear your name, [how can you fear God's name if you don't know His name?] from the least to the greatest. It is time to destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth." (NLT)

As we're seeing today; *destruction on the earth*. The Greek word for *angry* (KJV) (*filled with wrath NLT*) in verse 18, is Strong's #3710 and is the Greek word *orgizo* and it means "to enrage". It says it's from #3709 which is *orge* and it means "violent passion or wrath". So, we see, in the end time, mankind is going to hate and oppose the Father and the Son coming with violent anger, with wrath to the extreme. Those who have not conquered selfishness, those who give into selfishness will come to hate their Creator just as Satan has done. Satan has come to hate His Creator because he allowed selfishness to become part of him, to become part of his character. Let's go to one final scripture in Colossians 3:1. Going forward, this is kind of our marching orders. This is out of the NIV. Paul is writing to the church at Colossi but also to us today.

Colossians 3:1 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, [here's what he says we have to do] set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

2) Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3) For you died ... (NIV)

Let me read the rest of the verse out of the NLT.

3 continued) ... your real life is hidden with Christ in God. (NLT)

Verse 4 back to the NIV.

4) When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (NIV)

The solution to overcoming selfishness is to always put our Father first. Willingly submitting to Him—not begrudgingly—but fixing our hearts and minds on spiritual things, on things above. Spiritual thoughts, spiritual concepts, spiritual ideas, spiritual words and deeds. By loving our Father with all our being and loving His children, at least as much as we love ourselves. By understanding that selfishness is indeed

idolatry and by overcoming our selfish nature, then we can appear with them eternally in glory and honor and be in their presence.