

What Should Believers Be Aware of in Their Lives?

“He who loves pleasure *will be* a poor man;
He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” (Proverbs 21:17)

This passage is the one that touched my heart in my initial time as a believer. I was new in the faith and just started to know God through the Scriptures. This verse was one of the first that made an impact on my life at that time, and thinking about it, it is something that is valid throughout our path as Christians. God probably spoke to me at that time through this verse to put a foundation in my life about how I should live as a believer. Unfortunately, there were times in my life when I didn't pay attention to this teaching, and I ended up badly. I am not saying that a believer mustn't at all have any pleasures; I am just stating, as this verse says, that he mustn't love them. We all can have pleasures (I am obviously not speaking about anything sinful here), but we mustn't be driven by them. Instead, we need to be driven by God's guidance and grace, and He will provide for us what we need and make us have pleasure as well, but in the right manner.

Loving pleasures, even though not sinful things, and having them as our main purpose and goal might lead us to do what is sinful, too. We will lose discipline, and in this way, we will neglect looking for the things of God. We must also know that whoever is a newborn believer will have God as his delight. This desire and fire should always be burning in us. There will be times, though, that we will not feel the same, but we need to carry on. Sometimes, there will be trials, and we may not feel so close to God, but this might be a way for us to grow and get to another level in our relationship with God. Still, when we see that our fire for God gets quenched, we need to take measurements. And at last, loving pleasures could obviously be applied also for addictions. For any kind of

addiction. When we have some kind of addiction, we love, seek, and give priority to that particular thing more than anything else. Addiction steals our time and energy. It is like a parasite. In this way, we don't have and don't find time to seek God and His presence anymore. The priority we had for Him slowly fades away, and we also know that when black and white mix together, they turn into grey. In this way, we become poor in God. This is what one of the churches in the book of Revelation was warned about (Revelation 3:14-21). Jesus told the church that it needed repentance because it had become lukewarm.

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ **So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.** ¹⁷ **Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—** ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. **Therefore be zealous and repent.** (Revelation 3:14-19, emphasis added)

What was worse was that the church thought to be rich when the truth was that it was poor. We need to acknowledge our poverty in front of God. The worst part wasn't that the church was poor but that it couldn't acknowledge its need (poverty). This is what keeps us from getting close to God and becoming really rich in Him. I am obviously talking about being spiritually rich. What marks our failure in front of God is not the fact that we sinned but that we fail to acknowledge our sin and to see that we are far from God by acknowledging our needs. This is what makes us really to be a failure in front of Him. When we, instead, even

though falling, still keep on having the desire to be close to God and seek Him, we please Him more. I am not justifying the fact that we sinned with this. I am saying rather that this is the way to grow and overcome sin. Sometimes, loving pleasure and not acknowledging our need and dependence on God can take us slowly to be far from Him and become lukewarm. This could happen even before we start sinning seriously. Becoming lukewarm is what displeases God more. This is when we are not sensible to His voice. Two types of people could sin. One is a believer who acknowledges his need and poverty in front of God, and the other is a lukewarm person. We can say that the first case is in a better position. The one who is lukewarm should first repent from his attitude and then will be able to acknowledge and fight all the rest of the sins and issues he might be having. Many times, the major wrong is not only in the sin itself but in the attitude. Remember the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)? The one was thankful to God that he was not like others and didn't acknowledge his own sin, while the other wouldn't dare to look up to heaven because he was feeling unworthy and was crying for mercy. Both of them were sinners, but only one was acknowledging it. With the right attitude, we can fight sin in a better way. We cannot have it on our own, and we need to ask God to help us with that.

So, we see that the lukewarm persons are those ones who don't acknowledge their need and sin in front of God or even estimate and believe themselves to be good persons or believers who are right with God. They tend to think that they are spiritually rich in front of God.

We see the different attitudes the Pharisee and the Tax Collector were having. One thought he was better than others and was living as if everything was fine, and the other one acknowledged his wrongs. Our attitude and life should reflect what we truly are. The way we are on the inside. Not the other way around. Because if we attempt to do that by just changing certain outward habits and appearances we will not succeed. The way we live, behave, and do things cannot change what is inside us. Only God can do that. The people who refuse to change their

hearts and hide what is on the inside do that because they don't have faith that it can change, or maybe don't know that what needs to be mainly changed is their heart, and don't want to do it. Perhaps they are not aware that religion is not only about following certain customs and traditions or being at peace, but its main purpose is to change lives. That's why the Bible talks of being born again (John 3:1-8). This is a key moment for each person who approaches God, and it needs to happen so that he can become a believer and start his journey with Jesus. This is the moment when someone repents. Besides experiencing the peace and the blessings of God, a person experiences a radical change in his heart. God doesn't want to deprive you of all the things you like. Yes, some things that are sinful will be taken away, but He will not take all the things you like away from you. He will let you have them but in the right way. He wants us to live a fulfilled life. A life that is full of His presence and a life in which you will learn how to enjoy in the best way what He will provide for you.