

The One Supernatural Quality America Needs Right Now

“But this I say, brothers, the time is short. It remains that those who have wives should be as though they had none; those who weep, as though they did not weep; those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; those who buy, as though they possessed nothing; and those who use this world, as though they did not make full use of it. For the form of this world is passing away. ... But I prefer that you have no concern. ... that you may serve the Lord without distraction” (1 Cor. 7:29-32, 35).

Materialism has most of our nation and much of the church world by the throat. Mammon is our god. Our material prosperity, in many ways, is a greater danger than our poverty. It is killing our spiritual life, power and vibrancy. In a nation like ours it seems hard for the church to conceive and understand the paradox of “life coming out of death,” “glory coming out of suffering” and “power coming from our pain.”

The “Spirit-Filled Life Bible” has these comments to make concerning the above passage:

Paul presents this teaching in light of the tension between the temporal, unredeemed, secular order and the believer's spiritual life and calling. The present distress applies to the whole of this age and not to some distinct period of persecution in the first century. The spirit of this entire age is stressful, temporal and distracting.

Because of the nature of this age and the reality of the coming of Christ, believers are to adopt the attitude of finding the source of their life in Christ, rather than in earthly institutions, whether marriage, the social sphere or

the economic world. A Christian is to live intently and responsibly and yet see these realities as ultimately temporal.

This entire theme speaks of living unsettled, not putting down your roots in this temporal place called earth and living as spiritual pilgrims passing through. Whether you live here in the comforts of America, in some impoverished underdeveloped nation or somewhere in between, you can live in a state of unsettledness.

Let me illustrate with a couple of personal examples what it means to live in this attitude.

A pastor friend of mine, whom I will call Bill, a family man and nearly 50 at the time, sat with me at lunch one day and shared some deep thoughts and feelings he was experiencing. Tired of a lack of fruit-bearing power among some of his long-standing church members and all the fluff that goes with the profession of conventional ministry, he spoke of leaving his established church of some 20 years and living a different sort of Christianity. He also spoke of selling his home and totally unhooking from his familiar past.

"I scare my wife every time I talk this way," he said.

"What will you do?" I asked.

"I'll get a regular job, gather me a band of radical disciples like Jesus did, win souls and live out authentic relationship-based New Testament Christianity."