**STUFF**

 **By Walter Guy**

Several years ago my wife and I spent a few days in the Ft. Lauderdale vicinity. While there we paid a visit to a huge shopping mall called Sawgrass Mills Mall. This mall was so big that it would take an entire day just to peruse without any serious shopping. It is half a mile long with shops arrayed in a circle whose thoroughfare would make it a mile of over 6000 shops over the entire course. Some shops were small and others were huge outlets with merchandise packed from the floor almost to the ceiling.

 This was truly an impressive place to shop – you could probably find anything in there. However I was most impressed with only one thing – it sure was a lot of **STUFF**. I came away from there with a terrible sense of awareness; a feeling that all these many people I observed in there were in pursuit of **STUFF.** Basically, worthless stuff; stuff that may temporarily satisfy a lust or desire, but would soon leave them with a need to go back later to buy more **stuff**.

 What I recognized is that none of this stuff actually improved their lives, but just merely pre-occupied their time momentarily with new stuff that they would tire of or would soon become out dated by the appearance of new stuff. New stuff that they would think they needed to have because it was the latest and best.

 Too many of these shoppers failed to realize that they were caught up in the web of consumerism. Simply stated, many people were in a cycle of acquiring possessions to satisfy an emptiness in their lives; an emptiness that has to be repeatedly refilled; an emptiness that stuff could not really satisfy or meet the real need in their lives. Purchasing all this stuff was a vain effort to improve the quality of their lives.

Matthew 6:25-27- *Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*

 Unfortunately, Christians are among these many people I observed in the pursuit of stuff – stuff for self-indulgence. This has contributed to the spiritual and moral decline of the church in general and to its inability to have a more positive and life changing impact on society. The seeking of stuff is the evidence of carnal Christianity – effort to please and gratify self.

Matthew 6:31-34 - *Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.*

Jesus had a rebuke for such self-seeking and self-indulgent people.

Luke 12:15 – *And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”*

 The apostle Paul also addressed this fleshly behavior because he recognized it destructive qualities being a lure and snare of the enemy.

1Timothy 6:8 – *And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

Philippians 4:11- 13 – *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

 In this present day, due to our failing economy, some people are not able to satisfy their pursuit of stuff and instead show their frustration and dissatisfaction by joining protest movements, showing social unrest and discontentment, or promoting political candidates who will promise them more access to stuff.

Hebrews 13:5 - *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

 So how did we get to this point of such a preoccupation with obtaining “stuff”? Well it all boils down to the base human nature and its three areas of vulnerability; the “I want”; the “I will”; and the “I am”. Biblically it is called the lust of the eye, lust of the flesh and pride of life.

1 John 2:15-16 – *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

 The standard rule in advertising and sales appeals to this base human nature and is always employed when trying to convince others to decide for what they are pushing or selling. This first rule in sales and advertising is to create a sense of DISSATISFACTION. Dissatisfaction with what you have, or what you are, in order to appeal to that human lust.

This concept has been successful for as long as mankind has been on earth. It was first employed by Satan in the Garden of Eden on Eve and lead to the first SIN and has been effective on mankind ever since. Consider how this temptation worked on Eve:

Genesis 3:6 – *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.*

 Notice the tree was good for food – it appealed to the lust of the flesh. It was pleasant to the eye – appealing to the lust of the eye. It was desired to make one wise – appealing to the pride of life or to affect one’s self perceived position. Satan was so successful with this tactic that he even tried to use it in Jesus; but Jesus was not full of lust for self sastifaction, so Satan could not use his favorite tactic of presenting “stuff” to persuade Christ – see Luke 4:1-12. (Note that Jesus resisted temptation by using the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, against Satan’s tactics.)

 Satan wants you DISSATISFIED! Satan wants you DISCONTENT! He appeals to your lust by showing you things, ideas, positions, possessions, means of gaining control and influence, etc. How vulnerable are you to his efforts to be dissatisfied and discontent? How much of the “stuff” of this world is drawing you away from God, His Word and His Kingdom?

 Jesus knows Satan’s tactics which is why He gave us clear instructions on where to place our desires.

Matthew 6:33 – *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

 Jesus even gave us parables showing that the value of His Kingdom is so far greater than any of this world’s possessions that others have traded all their worldly goods to obtain that which has true value.

Matthew 13:44-46 – *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

 Please don’t give in to covetousness – it is a tool of Satan to bring you into bondage; the bondage of debt and being controlled by your creditors. Learn to be content with what God has provided for you and look to Him to fulfill your every need. This will prevent you from falling into Satan’s snare. This will help you from falling into sin through the lusts as previously mentioned because sin is the result of a lust that is tempted and has conceived.

James 1:14-15 – *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and desires and enticed. Then, when lust/ desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

 So beware the quest for **STUFF**! Exercise SELF-CONTROL which is called “temperance” in Galatians 5:22 and is a Fruit of the Spirit. The Lord is to be your contentment!