

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Regard Not Your Stuff”

By Tom Wacaster

It is not uncommon for a single verse to contain a little nugget of truth that astounds and challenges even the most experienced Bible students. Today while reading again the wonderful story of Joseph, I came across the statement Joseph made to his brethren: **“regard not your stuff.”**

“**Stuff**” is our English word for material possessions. All of us have our “**stuff**,” much of which sits on the shelf collecting dust, or is stored away in some box in the attic where spiders and moths destroy their once-intrinsic value. Historians might look back on this generation and declare it the age of the “storage shed.” The past 50 years has seen a dramatic increase in the personal possessions of the average American. In the 1950’s, the average family lived in a 900 square foot house, with a single bathroom, two bedrooms, a small but adequate living area for family entertainment, and a single car garage for the one and only automobile that the family owned. With each passing decade the standard of living has increased. Today the average house contains 2500 square feet of living space, four bedrooms, two and half baths, a den (or family room), a living room, and a two car garage. In the 1950’s those seldom used items were stored in the attic. In the 1970’s our possessions increased and along with it the need for more space. So we backed our cars out of the garage and filled up the garage with our “**stuff**.” The 1980’s introduced us to the “storage shed” at some remote area – and for a modest monthly fee we could store all that unwanted “**stuff**” that cluttered up our attics and garages. Now we have attics, garages, and storage sheds full of “**stuff**.”

I am sure that Jacob had his “**stuff**.” After all, with so many wives, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, he simply could not avoid collecting “**stuff**.” Now Joseph invites his father to leave that “**stuff**” behind and come to Egypt. In faith this great patriarch saw in life’s disappointments and setbacks the hand of God moving to save the lives of his father and brothers. As he revealed himself to his brethren he invites them to go get their father and bring him and his family to Egypt. **“Take ye wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours”** (Gen. 45:20).

God abides in His heavenly home. He wants us to join Him. He invites, pleads, and has sent the “**wagons**” (His Son, the gospel, etc.) to safely carry us to that heavenly home. But in order to receive that wonderful inheritance, we must maintain a healthy attitude toward our “**stuff**.” Our Lord encourages us with these words:

“Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value then they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:25-34).

Jesus' message to us is the same as that of Joseph to his brethren: "**regard not your stuff.**" Some years ago I came across the following rather humorous but pointed anecdote:

"Stuff"

In spring I start stirring in my *stuff*. There is closet *stuff*, drawer *stuff*, attic *stuff*, and basement *stuff*. I separate the good *stuff* from the bad *stuff*, then I *stuff* the good *stuff* back in drawers and closets, attic and basement; then I *stuff* the bad *stuff* anywhere the *stuff* is not too crowded until I decide if I will need the bad *stuff*. When the Lord calls me home, my children will both want the good *stuff*; but the bad *stuff*, *stuffed* wherever there is room among the other *stuff*, will be *stuffed* in bags and taken to the dump where all the other people's *stuff* has been taken.

Whenever we have company, they always bring bags and bags of *stuff* and we have to move all of our *stuff* that's *stuffed* in every nook and cranny that's full of our *stuff* so they can hang and *stuff* their *stuff*.

When I visit my son he always moves his *stuff* so I will have room for my *stuff*. My daughter-in-law always clears a drawer of her *stuff* so I have room for my *stuff*. Their *stuff* and my *stuff* – it would be so much easier to use their *stuff* and leave my *stuff* at home with the rest of my *stuff*.

This spring I had an extra closet built so I could have a place for all the *stuff* too good to throw away and too bad to keep with my good *stuff*. You may not have this problem, but I seem to spend a lot of time with *stuff* – food *stuff*, cleaning *stuff*, medicine *stuff*, clothes *stuff*, and outside *stuff*. Whatever would life be like if we didn't have all the *stuff*?

Whenever we travel we bring all our good *stuff*. We mix all the *stuff* we brought together, then when we get ready to go home, all our *stuff* is scattered and mixed with everyone else's *stuff*, and someone has lost some *stuff*. Finally, all our *stuff* is *stuffed* in the car, and we go home and unload all our *stuff* and start washing and arranging all the *stuff* with the *stuff* we left at home.

Now, there is all that *stuff* we use to make us smell better than we do. There is the *stuff* to make our hair look good, the *stuff* to cover a bad complexion, *stuff* to make us look younger and *stuff* to make us look healthier, *stuff* to hold us in and *stuff* to fill us out. There is *stuff* to read, *stuff* to play with, *stuff* to entertain us, and *stuff* to eat – we *stuff* ourselves with all the good food *stuff*.

Well, our lives are filled with *stuff* – good *stuff*, bad *stuff*, little *stuff*, big *stuff*, useful *stuff*, junky *stuff* and everyone's *stuff*. Now, whenever we leave all our *stuff* and go to heaven, whatever happens to our *stuff* won't matter. We will have all the good *stuff* God has prepared for us. — **Tom's Pen**, May 2016. ■

The Simplicity of the Gospel

By Bob Hines

Back before the Civil War, "Raccoon" John Smith, a pioneer American preacher, was speaking of the plainness of the Gospel of Christ compared to the many and varied systems of men's religion. He was handed a note from the audience which said, "*if the gospel is so plain as you say it is, why do you have to labor so hard to get people to understand it?*"

Smith replied, "*I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had the kindest of soil, and the best seed, and the sowing was easy, I never got top or root till I took my axe and hoe and briar knife and went in and whacked and grubbed and cleared the ground. The Lord knows that I do not esteem it hard to preach the gospel to those who are prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice, and cut out systems, and clear away sectarian trash that cumpers the minds and hearts of the people....*" ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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