

Title: PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

Text: II Corinthians 4:17-18

Intro: One of the most common faults among those who claim to be Christians is that of having wrong priorities in this life. The truth is, we are amiss when it becomes our habit to put secondary things primary, and primary things secondary. It is hard to believe and yet so true that we sin and do much damage to ourselves when we put more value and importance upon the good rather than the better!

Our God is a God of order and not of confusion. He has made it so plain that we must have proper priorities. Having a sense of good priorities will spell the difference between true success and miserable failure.

The Bible makes it very understandable that there are things which should be of first importance in this life. With our limited time, we shall take up six of them, namely:

I. Righteousness before material things (Matt. 6:33).

- A.** Having righteous principles in life is far more important than obtaining material gain. This is a recurring theme throughout the Bible (**Prov. 15:16, 27; 28:20**).
- B.** A materialistic lifestyle is often accompanied by the illusion that accumulating money and possessions is the key to peace and prosperity (**I Tim. 6:9-10**).

II. The family before financial prosperity

- A.** Many pitch their tents toward Sodom without concern for anything other than material gain (**Gen. 13:12**).
- B.** Parents are often too busy in their quest for material prosperity that they neglect the spiritual and moral training of their children (**Eph. 6:1-4; Tit. 2:4-5**).

III. Self-correction before correction of others (Matt. 7:3-5)

- A.** To reverse this order is a common sin. We are inclined to be charitable with ourselves and severe with others.
- B.** We ought to be much more severe with ourselves and more charitable with others (**Rom. 2:1-3**).

IV. Reconciliation before acceptable worship to God.

(Matt. 5:23-24)

- A. Gift here may also mean anything we desire to offer God – a prayer, praise, thanksgiving, song, money, etc.
- B. God is never pleased and accepts no gifts from hearts filled with bitterness, anger and malice (**Eph. 4:31-32**).
- C. It is impossible to truly love God and hate a brother at the same time (**I John 4:20-21**).

VI. Personal holiness before happiness (II Cor. 7:1).

- A. Holiness is being pure and clean before God (**I Thess. 4:7**). Though most people shy away from the subject of holiness as though it was an embarrassing matter, the Bible speaks of the **“beauty of holiness”** (5X).
- B. Holiness is not just for God but for His children as well (**I Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 4:24**). If God is truly our Father, then we will resemble His holy character in everything we think, say or do. Like father, like son!
- C. A person can be temporarily happy without being holy; but when a man truly submits and follows our holy God, his end is also happiness (**Psa. 144:15**).

VII. Eternal before temporal things (II Cor. 4:18).

- A. **Salvation must be a high priority of the unsaved.**
 - 1. Because for it Jesus died (**I Pet. 1:18-19**).
 - 2. Because for it men must be aware (**Matt. 16:26**).
- B. **The church must take priority in our lives.**
 - 1. Jesus loved the church and died for it (**Eph. 5:25**).
 - 2. He will return to take it home (**I Thess. 4:16-17**).

Conclusion: Make no mistake about it. Our priorities will prove if we are just living for this present temporal world or preparing for the eternal one. My friends, if we expect to be with God in Heaven in the future, then we must practice giving first place to heavenly things even while we are still here on earth. The Bible declares, **“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”** (**Phil. 3:20**).