

Hoarding and Idolatry

Stocking Up

Do you come from frugal stock? I certainly do. I come from a family of 6. Both of my parents were Christian School teachers. If you are home schooling or are teaching in a Christian School I feel safe in guessing that you share a little of the frugal spirit too.

In these uncertain economic times that doesn't seem like something to blush at. Especially with a family to care for---can you beat the feeling of having some rainy day savings? Is there anything wrong with keeping the pantry stocked?

But at what point does being prudent cross the line and become the sin of lacking faith in God's provision?

And is it possible that the line is different for each of us?

Those things crossed my mind today as I was tempted to clear the shelf of peanut butter (killer price!) at my favorite discount grocery store. Maybe it was the potential embarrassment of a cartful of peanut butter; or maybe it was the theme of this short essay from a past GWNNews Teacher's Helper weighing on my conscience.

It sounds silly that peanut butter could be considered a test of faith. I resisted the urge to hoard, tossed two jars into my cart and felt better--I think. -- *Rich Bishop, GWNNews*

Hoarding Time

Webster's Dictionary defines *hoarding* as accumulating money, food, or the like, in a hidden or carefully guarded place for preservation or future use. So you can vegetables and put them in a cool cellar. Are you hoarding?

And how is hoarding idolatry-worship of something besides God?

There is a story of a man who lived in France around the year 1762. It is recorded that he was wealthy but no one really knew how wealthy or where he kept his money. By some strange coincidence he was a farmer--like the man in Luke 12, the one who built barns and mocked the future.

Foscue, for that was the French farmer's name, liked to gloat over all the money he had saved. He had built a vault underneath his farmhouse, a vault which no one except himself knew about. Every now and then, Foscue would climb down a ladder into this vault.

One day as he climbed down to feel his money, the secret trap door slammed shut and he was locked in--alone with his money and his candle. His servants and, at length the entire village, searched for him. They dragged his pool, combed his woods, and offered rewards for Foscue's recovery. But no one found him.

He had no heir and the property he had so carefully accumulated was sold, including his house and barn. The new owner, after a period of time, hired workmen to make some alterations to the cellar. They discovered Foscue's body, sitting upright between his earthly treasure. Beside the dead man lay a candle holder. It held no candle.

In a last desperate attempt to stay alive, Foscue had eaten the candle.

It is a wonderful thing to have enough to eat, a roof over one's head, and decent clothes to wear. These are gifts of God. "When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 5:19). Sometimes, however, this gift becomes entangled with self deception and greed. Sometimes there is no thought of the heavenly wealth which God has prepared for all those who love him.

Governments and citizens alike are often overly concerned with material economy--stocks, bonds, and banks. They are not concerned enough with spiritual economy--love, joy, peace, and treasures in heaven. A person doesn't need two cars in the garage or a swimming pool or a millionaire's bank account in order to be wealthy.

On the other hand, a person needs very little to become a miser. A soul needs only a desire to hoard whatever--much or little--he has accumulated in order to worship what should instead be enjoyed and shared. That's true whether it is as little as a jar of preserves or as large as a Mercedes Benz.

Yes, hoarding is idolatry

1 Tim 6:6-19 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

