

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To Dr Claude Lewis, October 22, 1965

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October 22, 1965.

Dr. Claude A. Lewis,
545 E. Pine Street,
Central Point, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

Since our talk on the way from Medford to this part of the state Tuesday evening, I keep thinking of the matter that was the theme of that discussion, and maybe I ought to say a bit more about it.

I'm afraid that it may have sounded that I was trying the way of too sharp and inclusive criticism of the teaching of Orville Winters, covering too much in my criticism as I felt that he did in his teaching. I don't think that God wants everybody to be rich or even what we should call prosperous; but neither do I want to disagree with all that Orville was teaching.

There is no doubt in my mind that most people would be better off, even financially, if they followed God's plan for them faithfully. There is abundance of evidence to the effect that the right kind of a life is profitable and prosperous and happy beyond the wrong kind of life, evidence in the lives of multitudes of mankind and attested in many places in scripture; blessings in the physical, the financial, the social and every other department of human life. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (I Tim. 4:8). There is abundance of evidence that God blesses faithfulness and obedience to his will, and that the life of fullest faithfulness and obedience is the life of fullest blessing, and that this blessing may, and if you insist, usually is in part blessing in the things of time and sense, including the matter of money.

But that God ^{does not} ~~wants~~ every faithful follower to be rich, or comfortable, or popular, or with any ~~other~~ the other things that most people consider elements of good fortune, seems to me evident both from the scripture and from the lives of the billions of men and women and children in the world. Following the will of God kept Jesus so poor that He "had not where to lay His head; it kept Paul poor, and SO ON AND ON (the capitals are purely unintentional.)

Hannah, speaking of God's dealings with humanity, said, "The Lord maketh poor and He maketh rich." (I Sam. 2:7.)

Jesus said, to His closest followers, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20.)

Paul, after mentioning many hardships, afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, fastings, etc., finishes the recital, "as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. II Cor. 6:10). And speaking of Jesus Christ, he said "though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor." II Cor. 8:9).

James says, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?"
James 2:3.)

Jesus said to the rich young ruler, "Go and sell that thou hast". Matt. 19:21.

To come to things closer in time, ministers, missionaries, nurses, teachers, all the so-called "sacrificial callings", and many in humbler stations than these definitely give up money for the sake of service to God and humanity. If all the missionaries were to say "I must have \$5,000 a year or I won't go" -- the thing is unthinkable. A visitor to a South Sea Island hospital saw a nurse working with patients whose gangrenous wounds and filth and other nauseating surroundings made him gag, and said to a companion as he watched the nurse, "I would not do that job for a million dollars." The nurse heard him and said, "Neither would I."

The warnings against riches and the love of riches are many and striking. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many wicked and hurtful lusts that drwon men in destruction and perdition. (I Tim. 6:9). "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not go unpunished." (Prov. 28:20). "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:23.)

Many people think they are quoting scripture when they say that "Money is the root of all things." It isn't money, it is the love of money; and a more accurate translation of the Greek than the King James Version gives is, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."

This idea of paying a tithe of what you want to have for the ensuing year and thereby rather putting God under an obligation to see that you have that desired income -- I can't go along with that. If you are able to pay pay more than a tithe into the work of God, that's one thing; but as you said so well, if you double your gifts to the church so that God will double your income, that's what the old Hoosier Quakers used to say, "That's a gray horse of another color."

But maybe you've thought of all these things; and anyhow it ceased to be the 22nd of October an hour and forty two minutes ago, and I think I'll end this and get to bed.

With best wishes to all of you, and happy memories of that ride with you Tuesday night,

Sincerely your friend,