

LIFE IS LIKE A VAPOR

Int.

1. Aim: To compare the brevity of life to a vapor and the lessons we can learn from this.
2. Jas. 4:14 “Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”
3. Did you ever stand and watch the tea kettle as it boiled, and wonder where the steam went? If you did, no doubt you learned later in life that steam is a vapor that disappears as it becomes a part of the air. Vapor = mist, moisture diffused in air
4. No doubt you have also learned of other things that are like steam, that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away.
5. In this life, we are prone to seek those things that offer security, pleasure, profit and durability.
 - a. But James points out that even life, with its security, pleasure, profit and durability, is still as “a vapor, that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away.”
 - b. So, if our very lives are subject to vanishing away, all those physical things that have to do with this life will also cease to exist.
 - c. What a tragedy for any life to be lived primarily for the vaporous things.
 - d. Such a life can have no real lasting substance.
6. Now, let us consider a few things that are of a vaporous nature: those that are temporary and not permanent:

Discussion

I. MATERIAL POSSESSIONS ARE JUST A VAPOR

- A. On every hand, we rush to be successful - get more money, gain, wealth, etc.
1. It seems that if one is not making a lot of money he is a failure.
 2. But, if he is wealthy, he is a success--no matter what his character might be.
- B. A long time ago, Jesus said: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Lk. 12:15.
1. Then, He went on to tell of a rich man who trusted in his riches while he forgot his duty to God. Lk. 12:16-21.
 2. We read such warnings as this, but we still don't learn, do we?
 - a. We continue to seek material things to the detriment of our souls.
 - b. Why can't we learn the wisdom of 1 Tim. 6:6-10?
 3. Yes, wealth is a vapor, and it cannot last longer than our lives here upon this earth, and many times it does not even last that long.
- C. The "wealthiest" man that ever walked upon this earth, put material things into their right perspective places by saying:
1. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Mt. 8:20.
 2. Giving up the riches of heaven, He lived on the earth without the material things we take for granted. Phil. 2:5-8.
 3. And He tells us: "Lay up treasures in heaven..." Mt. 6:20.
- D. Spiritual things are the ones that will last. So, Christians should look "not at the things seen, but at the things not seen: for the things seen are temporal, but the things not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18.

II. POPULARITY, AND THE PRAISE OF MEN, ARE AS A VAPOR

- A. It is only natural to want to be loved and recognized.
- B. None of us will deliberately set out to make people dislike us.
1. But sometimes we forget to put the approval or disapproval of other people in their proper places.
 2. When all people speak well of us, we need to be careful.
 3. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets." Lk. 6:26.
 4. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Prov. 16:18.
 5. Flattery can lead us to compromise truth and principle in order to be popular
- C. It is said of some chief rulers of the Jews: "Many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Jn. 12:42.
1. What a picture this portrays! They knew what they should do. But they refused, because their popularity might suffer!
 2. Lest we should become "Wise in our own conceit", Rom. 12:16
 3. Whenever we begin to think of ourselves as important, let us answer those questions that God put to Job.
 - a. Read Job 38.
 - b. If we will consider the majesty of God, we will have no room for pride; and the praise of men cannot sway us from the course He wants us to walk.
 4. Paul said: "It is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self...He that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. 4:3,4.
- D. What other people think is not important, when compared with the Lord's approval.

III. THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE A VAPOR

- A. Moses was confronted with a very difficult decision in the long ago.
1. Should he take sides with his people, Israel, against the Egyptians?
 2. Or should he continue to act as an Egyptian, the grandson of the Pharaoh?
 - a. Heb. 11:24,25, gives us the answer. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;"
 - b. No, the "pleasures of sin" don't last. They are only for a season.
 3. The pleasure that comes from sin is a vapor that too soon is gone; and many times only remorse is all that's left.
 - a. Judas Iscariot must have had great anticipation as to the enjoyment and pleasure he was going to get out of spending the thirty pieces of silver.
 - b. But he never enjoyed the use of the money he obtained for betraying the Christ. Mt. 27;3-5.
- B. Jesus warned that the "cares, riches, and pleasures of this world" would choke out the word of God from a person's heart. Lk. 8:14.
1. Our prayer should echo the words of Gal. 1:4, "Deliver us from this present evil world."
 2. Yes, temptations are strong, and frequent.
 - a. And the devil will dress immorality in the most attractive garb he can
 - b. But, before succumbing to such temptation, think of your relationship with God: an hour after the sinful deed is done. A day after, or even a year. And finally, think of eternity.

3. No, no one denies that there can be pleasure in sin.
 - a. But it is only "for a season".
 - b. And the season is too short.
- C. So, don't give up your soul for a "vapor that vanisheth."

IV. LIFE, IN THIS WORLD, IS BUT A VAPOR

- A. "But we have to make a living!"
 1. How often we hear this, as we try to exhort someone to give their lives to the Lord.
 2. Let us look again and read the context of Jas. 4:13-17.
 3. We need to recognize that our lives belong to God, and we live only according to His mercy and will.
 4. We must also recognize that we must die. Heb. 9:27.
- B. Note the writing of Solomon on the matter of death. Eccl. 9:5; 12:7.

CONCLUSION

1. So, rather than build our hopes on "a vapor, that vanisheth away",
 - a. Material possessions, popularity, pleasures of sin, life on this earth
 - b. Let us seek those things with substance.
2. Look at what Paul wrote in:
 - a. Rom. 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - b. Col. 3:1-2 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

3. Peter tells us that the material things, even this earth, will vanish away 2 Pet. 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
 4. But the spiritual values are eternal.
 - a. 2 Cor. 4:18 "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal."
 - b. 2 Cor. 5:1 "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."
 - c. That is no vapor, but hope with substance.
 5. Life on this earth is like a vapor - it will only last for a short while - we must use this time to prepare for our eternal life with God -
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