

We must not allow the trials and tribulations of this life to take away the smile on our faces, the joy in our hearts, and the hope in our souls. And we must not allow the attractions of earthly pleasures or earthly treasures to either keep us out of the spiritual family of God or draw us back into the way of the world.

Our Lord made it very clear in the parable of the sower that these are very real dangers. *“And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth”* (Matt. 13:20-21). *“And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection”* (Lk. 8:14).

In yet another instance Jesus encountered a rich, young ruler (he already had three ingredients which men declare as essential to both success and happiness -- riches, youth, and power) who eagerly ran to Him, kneeled before Him, and asked what he must do to receive eternal life. Both his actions and his question show that the gaining of eternal life was very important to him, but his reaction to the answer of the Lord shows that something else was more important to him. The story ended with his rejecting eternal life for that something else! Read one of the accounts in Matthew 19:16-22.

Paul wrote to the saints in Galatia: *“O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?”* (Gal. 3:1). And: *“I am afraid of you lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain”* (Gal. 4:11). And: *“Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?”* (Gal. 5:7). To the saints at Corinth he said, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:3). He warned the Colossians saints in these words: *“Let no man rob you of your prize”* (Col. 2:18). Said the Lord to the saints in Philadelphia, *“I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown”* (Rev. 3:11).

Brethren, we must never allow any discouragement or disappointment, any trial or affliction, any allurements of sinful pleasures, any weariness in well-doing, any imaginary or real wrong suffered at the hands of others to rob us of the only prize that makes life worth living. Being right with God, having His approval, receiving His forgiveness of all past sins, possessing the hope of eternal life, being ready for the judgment, looking forward to eternity -- these must not be surrendered for any temporal advantage, pleasure or possession of any sort. **DON'T GIVE IN TO SATAN AND GIVE UP YOUR CROWN.** And remember also that you will not only miss heaven; you will have to face hell, forever