

What Are You Chasing?

Joe Slater

“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

In the text above, Paul’s word pursue is the same as “persecute” elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to chase. Saul persecuted Christians by chasing them down to harm them. After becoming a Christian, the same man urged the Thessalonians to chase what was good for themselves and everyone else.

By contrast, he urged them not to seek payback for ill treatment. Too many are bent on revenge! Jesus taught His disciples to *“love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44). Revenge appeals to the flesh, but God calls us to rise above it.

Paul exhorted Timothy to flee the love of money and all the pitfalls that go with it, and to *“pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness”* (1 Timothy 6:9-11). A few years later Paul urged him similarly: *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Timothy 2:22).

Successfully chasing something takes energy; it takes time; it takes determination and perseverance. Is what you catch worth the effort? If you’re chasing revenge, money, or fulfillment of the fleshly appetites, you might say “yes” at first, but in the long run you’ll be disappointed. The pursuit of righteousness and good things, however, yields rich rewards both now and eternally.

Next issue, we’ll look at some other specific things we should pursue. Stay tuned!

Time To Pray

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

A common complaint (or maybe better put, excuse) is this: “I just don’t have time to pray.” Indeed we are all busy with everyday life. We may work, go to school, and have family obligations.

Yet, we do find in the scriptures many who were busy, but always had time to pray. Daniel was the prime minister of one hundred and twenty-seven Babylonian provinces, yet daily and frequent were his devotions.

King David had to give audience to ambassadors, orders to generals, and instruction to magistrates, yet he said, *“Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud”* (Psalm 55:17).

And then there is Jesus. He was busy with bringing salvation to mankind. We read about Him, *“After he had sent the multitudes away, He went up into the mountain to pray, and he continued all night in prayer to God”* (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12).

So frequent was His practice and so rewarding His experience, that the disciples requested lessons on prayer (Luke 11:1).

We must find the time to pray, even if we must skip a television program, neglect surfing the Internet or shorten a meal.

Let's take time to pray!

--Hugh Shira (deceased)

Choosing: Fail or Survive

In his book, "Collapse - How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive," Jared Diamond relates the story of the Easter Islanders. It is a tragic story, but at the same time a good lesson for all of us.

For about 600 years the inhabitants of Easter Island were a highly developed civilization. They were most noted for more than 800 monuments that were so massive that they remain a mystery even today.

The end result of their workmanship was a depletion of the natural resources. The environment of this tiny island was completely destroyed.

Surely they must have realized that their very existence depended on these limited resources. Surely they must have seen what was happening. Nonetheless, the effect of their lifestyle led to their destruction. It was their choice to either fail or survive.

I am reminded of mankind and their lifestyle during the days of Noah. Did they give no thought to their actions? God did. "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5 ASV). Surely they were exposed to God's desired will for them. After all, Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Nevertheless they continued in their evil lifestyle. Eventually they must have realized, as the waters began to rise, that they had waited until it was too late, and that their demise was imminent. It was their choice to either fail or survive.

Is our lifestyle like those of Noah's day? Are we living for the world instead of for God? Are we destroying our spiritual environment as Easter Islanders destroyed their physical environment? Or as those in Noah's day destroyed their spiritual environment? We, as they, have the choice to either fail or survive. It's up to us.

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)