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The Illusions of the Flesh.

Dear Friend,

Recently I ministered a series of messages that revolved around (the illusions of the flesh.) Surprisingly I used as part of my illustration base an old Hollywood production called the *Matrix*.

Believe me when I say rarely ever have I found anything coming out of Hollywood to be worthy of being used as a Biblical illustration, but this seemed to give a modern day example to an age old truth. Let me add here a footnote of disclosure, any reference to this movie is not a validation of all it's scenes in which I viewed through censored TV, now with that said let's go on.

In brief the movie the Matrix is a science fiction tale of a futuristic war between humans and computers. The computers we use now become self aware or begin to think on their own. As a result they take over the human race. In the war the sunlight is destroyed by a huge atomic explosion thus leaving no source of solar power on planet earth. The computers needing a power source discover that the human body generates a certain surge of electrical energy. The computers actually begin to harvest human beings in vast laboratories by the millions. The reason for this is to use them as batteries.

To keep all of humanity in harmony with their test-tube surroundings they feed their brain through a computer program called the Matrix. Each of these human beings believes with all certainty that what they see, feel and touch is reality. Everyone believes they are living his or her life in a normal fashion never realizing that nothing they are seeing is real. The greater story is that of a group of people who miraculously break free from the matrix and really see life as it is, not clouded by the illusion that was being presented to them. The deception now being exposed by the truth this group of people began to look for a savior to lead them out of the matrix.

While on a recent ministry trip in the central part of Florida my hotel room was nestled in a beautiful city that spanned across three counties. The city had been designed and built for convenient retirement living. People from all over the world come there to retire and live out their days in pleasure. The uniqueness of the city was in its design. It was divided into several quaint villages with some being built around a town square that has somewhat of a European flavor to it. The atmosphere was one something like that of Disney World. A panoramic view around the town square would reveal every convenience necessary, for example: a bank, a church, an ice cream parlor, a gym, a library and a movie theater to name just a few.

I believe each little village had its own golf course as well. The golf carts in the streets were legal and probably out numbered the cars. The carts were made by names like Cadillac and Mercedes. I saw nothing of the baser sort like ugly or lewd kinds of bars but instead generally things that would remind you of a perfect place to raise a family and I am sure young families live there as well.

Everyone seemed happy and as I entered the Starbucks on the corner I could see that it would be easy to fall prey to the mind set that this would be the perfect place to live.

I could feel the sense of relaxation and the pleasure that surrounded me. Yet there was a gnawing check on the inside of me that all was not as it appeared. I could not stop thinking about the matrix, where an illusion kept everyone happy while living out a useless or ineffectual existence. Here I could see the illusion that keeps people believing that they were put here on this planet to serve themselves and find their own happiness at any expense. After all this is the American dream isn't it? Beside that what is wrong with happiness? Isn't it God's will for all of us to be happy? The answer is of course yes, but not at the expense of his will, but rather in his will for us.

Friend, I knew that each one of the hundreds of people I was passing on the street had a call of some sort from God. Each had a purpose to fulfill in his kingdom and in the evangelism of the earth for Christ. I also knew that this illusion to serve oneself would enslave most of them from ever being able to break free and give God the time necessary to develop that ministry. The ugliness of perversion was not stopping most of these people; it was much more subtle than that. The wholesomeness of a self fulfilling life was their illusion or their stumbling block. I should add here that I believe this city like many other cities has strong believers with powerful works of ministry going on in it.

When Jesus came into this world he was the first man in four thousand years to be born spiritually alive. His assignment was clear. He was to live his life under the total surrender to the Father who had sent him. He was to deliver the doctrine of his Father to those who could no longer hear the voice of God through the religion of the hour and he was to ransom the entire human race through his death, and resurrection. In short, the objective of his task would be to produce other human beings just like himself who would in turn surrender their entire life to the Father.

Can you imagine the patience required on Jesus part to work with a group of men who had no concept of being able to totally surrender their lives to the Father.

When Jesus would make statements like "*my life is not my own,*" "*I can do nothing without the Father,*" (**John 5:30**) "*if any man will lose his life he will find it, if any man will find his life he will lose it.*" (**Matt 16:25**) These statements were so foreign to the disciples that they could not conceive what he was saying. Even after their conversion to Christ and a change of nature the fact remained these teachings were absolutely contrary to the nature of their flesh and/or the bodies they lived in.

From the cradle to the grave we are taught one message from the system or this world, 'what's in it for me.' Even things of innocence beginning with the nurturing process say this planet revolves around me. A baby cries and a mother rushes to deliver a bottle. Everything from adolescence to adulthood is usually a lesson of people's ambition to serve them selves. Even if you have been treated poorly in life and abused it still serves as a lesson to you that it's all about the individual, even though it has been at another's expense.

The illusion that is presented to our flesh by the world is what about me, when do I get mine, don't I deserve to be happy? This is the world of the matrix, the illusion that our life is our own to possess and do what we will or what we wish. It's not that Christ has not provided for our happiness but our life is not our own. The word says I have been bought with a price, my life is not my own.

19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.
I Corinthians (19-20)

Let's just think for a moment about the subtlety of this illusion and how few in this life ever truly break free from it. In Luke 14 Jesus is talking about a supper being served by a rich man.

Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor [thy] rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed [is] he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one [consent] began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.
(Luke 14:12-21)

Obviously this rich man is our heavenly Father. The supper that is being served is the kingdom of God. In his kingdom is all the nourishment of salvation, deliverance, healing etc. The guests he truly wants his ministers to serve are called at the end – the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind. Notice that the first people the servant offered this meal to were those who seemingly had their life all together. This was really the very ones that Jesus had just said don't go to. Why then in his parable did he first send his servant out to these people? First we have to understand this was spoken against the religious order of the day. They had forgotten their ministry to serve and were serving themselves.

One might think well that was the order of the Scribes and Pharisees but let's just see what stopped them and how close these things are to us. What were their excuses? And truly that was all that God saw them as, *excuses*. ***The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.***

The question would be what is wrong with any of these things in and of themselves? The answer to that question is nothing. The sin was in the subtlety that these things were so justifiable that no one could argue against them and yet they kept the individual in a world of illusion believing their life was their own and that they did not have the time to come and serve in the kingdom.

If anyone today were to present these things to me as a pastor as seemingly good excuses of why they were too busy to be used in service to the King, their line of reasoning or the illusion would be how can you pronounce any of these as wrong? The problem comes in when these ordinary aspects of life become a continual list of reasons why one is not able to serve in the great supper. The false

impression of apparent acceptableness is so subtle that it seems justifiable, still in the end it is only an illusion misleading one to believe their life is their own.

Paul the apostle who was graced to write most of the New Testament had one ambition in life and he spelled this out in Philippians the third chapter. ***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***
(Philippians 3:10-14)

The mark that Paul was pressing towards was not a great apostleship or be known as a great minister of the gospel. In fact it was quite the contrary. He desired that he **not** be known but rather to find his identity only in Christ. When he wrote that I may know him, all that followed was synonymous with this singleness of purpose. That I may know him was his heart's cry to be transformed into the image of Christ that he would know him so intimately that he could (*attain to the resurrection of the dead.*) The Greek actually says, *the resurrection out of the dead*, meaning a coming out resurrection in this life. Paul wanted to live so close to Jesus and his will for him that his life was not his own and that every aspect of his life was the walk of a dead man. Paul said, ***for to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. (Phil 1:21)*** and Christ said ***he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; (John 14:9)*** Paul was pressing towards a mark to be conformed into an image that would radiate Christ so much so that to see him **was** to see Christ.

Thus Paul was breaking free from the matrix. He had discovered that his life was not his own. Friend the secret of this freedom is a continual lifestyle of the pursuit of Christ. Only then will the subtleties which can appear so justifiable be brought into the light. This light seems to best appear while spending precious time in the presence of our Father. Private worship and meditating the scriptures provide access into mountains of grace. From this grace flows all the strength necessary to freely and joyfully lay down our lives for our King.

Love,

Pastor Bronc

P.S. - The word says that we are to exhort one another daily while it is called today and that if two shall agree as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of our Father which is in heaven. If you have a prayer request or a praise report to share please let us hear from you. You can contact us through the web site at www.broncflint.org or email us at fpc@broncflint.org and/or feel free to write us at:

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