

## Misdirected Faith

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On a scale of 1 through 5 (**1 being Very little - 5 being Much**) how much *anxiety* do finances cause in your life? I would venture to say that most people these days will likely answer 4 or 5 pertaining to that question. Why do you suppose that might be? The short answer most people would give is obvious, "Without money you cannot do anything, and there never seems to be enough left at the end of the month!" The fact is, you cannot purchase food, you cannot pay the mortgage or rent, you cannot put gas in the car without money! Next question: who pays the bills in your house, who is it that is the main source of income for providing for your needs? Take a moment to write down a short list of your primary and secondary financial resources (such as you, your spouse, or roommate). After that, jot down a few alternate sources of income; what are some of the things you can do to generate alternate or additional sources of income to supply for your needs? Keep this list handy for future reference. The bottom line is that money is very important to all of us; however, if you call yourself a "Christian," what is your view of this passage in the Bible:

### **Matthew 6:25-26 (NIV)**

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

What is this passage telling us, *is* it telling us to sit back and wait for the Manna to fall from the sky, and God will take care of all of our needs? If that is true, how does that reconcile with the following passage?

### **2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." <sup>11</sup> We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

Either we are missing something, or this may be one of those infamous "contradictions" in the Bible, that Atheists and Agnostics are always alluding to without any specificity on their part! Because I believe there are *no* contradictions in the Bible, I would venture to say that most people simply do not understand a few things about God and how He actually supplies for our needs. Before getting into that, let us first explore a few present-day myths, facts, and legends. There are many people are caught up in what I will refer to as, "*The Conservation Craze*." People are, in my personal opinion, overly concerned about the natural resources we depend on such as Oil, Coal, and Natural Gas; some to the point of fanaticism. I agree that we should not waste our resources, but - I do not believe we really have to worry about our resources nearly as much as many people do these days, *especially if we say*

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*we have faith in God and His Word.* I was in Grammar School in the 1960's, and I remember sitting in class when the teacher, reading out of a "science book," was talking about how we got our supply of oil throughout the world. Basically back in the 1960's, we were taught in school that over millions, and millions of years, rotting vegetation, dead animals and dinosaurs were somehow transformed into the **Sticky Goo** we call, "crude oil." Natural Gas was a product of the same process, and coal... well I really don't remember what they said about formation of coal... it was a long time ago. Nevertheless, even as a young child, there were a few things that bothered me about what I was being taught.

First, it was never explained where we could go to see this process continuing to take place. People these days, make a big issue about "*Following the Science.*" However, in order to be "scientific" certain rules apply; i.e. one must be able to observe, test, and / or duplicate whatever is under study. At the time, I lived in a rural area of New Jersey with lots of dead and decaying vegetation everywhere, but there was no Sticky Black Goo to be found, anywhere! The way I saw it, there should be oil under every mulch pile if you dig deep enough; certainly, this had to be an ongoing process! As time went on, I wondered, why all the oil only showed up in certain geological areas. I also wondered how did dead dinosaurs, dead leaves and vegetation get hundreds of miles out to sea, in the Gulf of Mexico under hundreds of feet of water and yet create the same sticky goo as found hundreds of miles inland. As far as how much oil there was; in the 1960's, we were taught that by the year 2000 the supply would be completely gone! That got my attention because I knew at my house we used oil to heat our house in the winter. I soon began to think to myself that there must not be as much oil as I imagined, and I started getting fearful as many people are today thinking that we were in deep trouble!

### How much "fossil fuel" do really we use?

So, how much of these resources do we really have, how much do we need, and more importantly, are we really running out? These are all legitimate concerns, and once again, I agree that we should not be wasteful with any of our resources. However, I do not feel we are going to run out, and I will tell you why, but first, some important considerations. To put things into perspective, on just about any clear day you may see dozens - if not hundreds of contrails crisscrossing the sky. Jets flying so high you may not even see the airplane itself produce these, which are caused by condensation when the hot jet exhaust hits the freezing temperatures at high altitudes. Did you ever wonder how much fuel the average airplane has on board for each flight? Here are a few interesting statistics: The popular Boeing 737, one of the smaller airliners, carries between 4 to 6 thousand gallons of fuel. A Boeing 757 carries about 11.4 thousand gallons and a Boeing 787 carries between 6.4 and 7.6 thousand gallons of fuel. If you see 4 contrails behind a plane, it could be the mighty Boeing 747 which carries between 48 and 63 thousand gallons of fuel!

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A 747 burns about a gallon of fuel for every second of flight! Those little specks in the sky, some of which you can't even see, represent a whole lot of jet fuel being consumed! To get a better idea of how much fuel is consumed daily, multiply the average of the fuel used by these four popular planes by 104.4 thousand, this is the approximate number of flights daily in the United States alone! Once again, that is a lot of fuel being used, every day! We haven't even mentioned cars, trucks, ships and all the other things that depend on so-called "fossil fuels!" It is mind boggling how much oil is consumed daily just here in the U.S.A. Yet, here it is 2021 and we still haven't run out. According to many sources, we are now being told we have approximately another 50 years before we run out... *for sure*. Once again, I do not believe that, and if you keep reading, I will tell you why. I find it humorous sometimes as the "Goal Posts" are constantly being moved when the "scientist's" predictions don't pan out.

At the beginning of this writing, the Bible passages I referred to, indicated that God is not only aware of our needs, but He tells us not to *worry* (or be overly concerned) about our needs. The question we have to consider now is whether "*God's supply*" is *finite*, or *infinite*. If we adhere to the *rotten leave and rotten dinosaur theory*, this implies there is a finite supply of oil which, *I remind you*, was supposed to be gone many years ago according to what I was taught as a child. However, while in the process of writing the original version of this article back in 2016, I was listening to the news on the radio, they had just announced that there was a new oil field discovered in the state of Texas. The find contains an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil; also, it was estimated to hold 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 1.6 billion barrels of natural gas liquids! On top of that, it is common knowledge that the United States alone has the most oil reserves of any country in the world! Hmmm - so did we just stumble across this find just in time, or is something else going on here? Were my grammar school teachers lying, or were they simply misinformed? Perhaps they had more faith in science, rather than faith in God! Please consider the following: Most of us who identify as Christian, pray to God when we have a need. We ask God for our supply because God's Word says, all of our needs, yes, everything we would ever need, is provided by God, even before we recognized our needs for ourselves. Even before we were ever born God has already provided for all our needs! I know that if you are a member of what I previously called the "Conservation Craze," you will have a problem with what I am about to say, but here it is... God has provided for humankind, all the oil we will ever need! Notice I did not say "will provide" but rather **"has provided."** If you say that you trust in God and His Word learn to relax a little! How can you say with one breath, God is "all sufficient - the supplier of all of our needs," then in the next breath express fear that we are running out of oil or anything else for that matter?

Many years ago, I worked for a company that was in the process of shifting its manufacturing to China and Mexico. All of my fellow workers, me included, knew a big layoff was coming and you could see the apprehension and depression in most people's faces. Someone came up to me one day expressing their concern and their fear and asked how I felt about it, knowing I was a Christian.

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I quoted the same passage that is at the beginning of this study, **Matthew 6:25-26 (NIV)**

<sup>25</sup> ***"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"***

<sup>26</sup> ***Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"***

*I followed it up with this statement:*

***"You either believe God and His word, or you don't... I choose to believe."***

## Faith and Fear

I chose to trust God, but that didn't mean I didn't have episodes of doubt and fear myself, I do not claim to be a "Super Saint," I too struggle at times! Concerning faith, many people feel as if they've "blown it" the moment they have a doubt or fear, they feel as though any positive effect of their faith was erased forever. However, these feelings can come to even the most seasoned believer. Satan is the author of fear, and it is one of his most used weapons against us. Fear and doubt are among the most powerful emotions we deal with and it is brought about because of trusting more in what we ourselves hear, see, and feel, rather than in what the statements and promises in the Word of God say. Remember in the very first paragraph of this lesson, I asked what your financial resources were? When you listed your financial resources, was God mentioned anywhere on your list? I will venture to say most of you listed your job, or jobs, your savings or investments etc. but I have a feeling many omitted God from their list of resources. I will admit that I baited you to a degree in the first paragraph, but I did it for a reason. I did it to provide you with a reference for yourself as to what, or whom, you put your faith in, God, your job, or yourself. If God was not on your list, I am also sure your anxiety level concerning finances was on the high side also. The converse is also probably true, if God *was* on your list, I'd be comfortable in saying your anxiety level was probably lower as well. Understanding that God provides for our needs is confusing at times. Back in the Garden of Eden God in fact provided for all the needs of Adam and Eve, when they became hungry there was food everywhere, all they had to do is take it. They didn't have to plant; they didn't have to do much of anything except enjoy life and fellowship with each other and God. Then... sin came into the mix!

### **Genesis 3:17-19 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

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And you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return."

Many people equate the term, "God's provision" with some kind of miracle. This is why many of us have what I will call "The Manna Mentality." When we think of God providing something, we think of something miraculous, like the way God provided for the Jewish people during the Exodus, i.e. Manna appearing every day, and pure drinking water gushing from solid rock. In the case of Adam and Eve, God did not stop providing for their needs, the only thing that changed was that now they had to *do something* for their needs to be met, whereas before they did not. In other words, they had to work! Because of their sin, what was free for the taking in the past now had some strings attached. God was disrespected, and just as parents would impose "consequences" on their own children for being disobedient, God did the same. God didn't stop loving Adam and Eve; however He now dealt with them differently.

### Genesis 3:24 (NKJV)

So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Notice a different tree is mentioned here)

Again, many think that God turned His back on Adam and Eve and even cut off fellowship with them because of their sin but this was not the case. God continued to interact with them and continued to do the same with their children as God also continues to interact with their offspring to this day. We are also their offspring!

So how can we say that God has provided for all of our needs when without money we cannot buy even the basics such as food and shelter? We cannot legally acquire money without some sort of a job, so how do we get off saying that God provides for our needs? What about your job... did you ever think that your job is a part of God's provision for your needs and the needs of your family? Some of you may think that it was a foolish question to ask, but **most** people miss this truth without even realizing it. One way you can tell if you missed it is to reflect a little on how much stress you endure concerning your job. Are you one of those who work 50 or 60 hours a week on a regular basis? You are afraid to refuse overtime or take time off for fear of losing your job... You always seem to be working, and there's no time for rest, relaxation or family... your stress level is off the chart! If I just described you, I am going to give you're the opportunity to change your life if you heed three simple words...

Start-Trusting-God.

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Before Jesus ascended back into heaven He told His people that *He would Never Leave Them or Forsake Them!* To forsake someone means to withdraw from or abandon him or her, to cease protecting him or her, to turn your back on him or her. Jesus said He would never do that! Do you believe Him? If you do, then stop *worrying* about your needs and start trusting Him! This includes the need for, Food, Clothing, OIL, Clean Air, Water, and Shelter! God promised us that He **will** take care of our needs if we seek Him and trust Him. Yes, being conservative with our resources is important, the Bible teaches us not to be wasteful... Yes our job is important; after all it *is* a part of god's provision. I will close with the following, it is a good illustration as to how God Provides for our needs...He works through His people and especially through His Love for all of us:

### Philippians 4:13-20 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. <sup>15</sup> Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. <sup>16</sup> For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. <sup>18</sup> Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

### Matthew 6:27-34 (NKJV)

<sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? <sup>28</sup> So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.