

Proverbs 11:1: “Weights and Measures: Just and Unjust”

Reading of the Text (Proverbs 11:1)

Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD,
But a just weight is His delight.

Prayer for illumination

Heavenly Father, we thank you for revealing Your Word to us and preserving it through the ages. Thank You for the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, whose shoulders we stand upon as we interpret and meditate upon Your Word. Please grant the illumination of the Holy Spirit as I preach, that I might say what You would have me say and that Your sheep would be fed. Give us attentiveness to apply Your Word to every area of our lives. Convict us when we fall short of Your standards and help us, relying solely upon the grace of Jesus Christ, to live as a redeemed people. We ask these things in Jesus' name through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction

A little over a year ago, we listened to a series of lectures on economic ethics by Greg Bahnsen in Men's Forum. For those of you who were able to listen to some or all of them, this sermon will hopefully provide a review and supplement to some of what we studied then. If you didn't get a chance to hear them and you would like a more extended and comprehensive treatment of economic ethics than I'll be able to provide today, you can borrow the series from the church library.

The text before us today applies to all of us because we all buy and sell things. Imagine, if you would for a moment, a world without commerce. Every one of us would need to grow, hunt, or gather our own food, weave and tailor our own clothing, build our own shelter, chop our own firewood, and we probably wouldn't get much beyond that. The reason why we have indoor plumbing, electricity, computers, automobiles, and refrigeration is because of a division of labor where each of us can specialize on a smaller set of particular tasks. This is God's design. In the beginning of human history, He said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”¹ He commanded us to be fruitful and multiply; to fill the world and subdue it for His glory.² We see a division of labor right from the beginning. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³ I would argue that part of the reason why Cain's sacrifice wasn't acceptable to God was because of a refusal to engage in commerce. Fallen man wants to go it alone. He doesn't want to admit that he is not self-sufficient. Cain could have traded some of his spare grain for one of Abel's sheep and offered an acceptable sacrifice to the LORD. Adam and Eve knew from the day that they fell that the shedding of blood is necessary for atonement⁴, when God killed the animals to clothe them; God had given this instruction, along

1 Genesis 2:18

2 See Genesis 1:28

3 Genesis 4:2

4 See Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22

with the promise that the seed of the man would crush the head of the serpent, in order to lead them to Christ.⁵ Cain's sacrifice of grain wasn't rejected because he was ignorant; it was rejected because he was rebellious and proud. The fall of man didn't utterly destroy our ability to engage in dominion by a division of labor, but it did complicate it. Theft, covetousness, fraud, intimidation, and coercion enter into the picture. Men and women cheat each other in commerce all the time. In a fallen world, people who specialize in a trade, use their knowledge of their craft to defraud their customers. This is why it is necessary to have just standards of weights and measures.

Now, it is not necessary to have absolutely uniform standards of weights and measures for every transaction in order for them to be just. Some standards of measure originated relative to the human body, such as the cubit. As long as all parties of a transaction agree on a standard of measure and there isn't coercion or fraud involved, there's no problem. You would certainly need to agree explicitly on whether you're using Larry's cubit or mine⁶ before making a trade, but it doesn't matter which of these you ultimately use as the objective measurement. Greater precision is required for some things than others. You wouldn't round to the nearest ton when measuring gold, and you wouldn't weigh a cow in grains or carats. Also, we often don't have time or patience to weigh and measure everything we buy ourselves. I've never seen anybody at a gas station with a graduated cylinder verifying the accuracy of the volume of gasoline they are buying. The scales and measures are often owned by the merchant, not the customer.

Today we are looking at a Proverb that deals with weights and measures. One of my coworkers asked me what I was preaching about this week. When I told him, he was surprised and fascinated to hear that the Bible addressed issues of economics. The Bible actually has a lot to say about wealth, money, trade, and economics, particularly the book of Proverbs. The Bible speaks to every area of life, and it is authoritative on every area of life. In fact, the Bible has so much to say about these issues that some people have taken these things out of the context of the rest of the Bible, distorted them, and developed a false "health, wealth, and prosperity gospel" that looks more like the theology of Job's friends than Christianity. I don't know if any of us in this room have ever sat under such teaching, but it's pervasive enough in American culture that you've probably heard of it before.

The church has long struggled with her relationship to wealth. In the ancient times of the church fathers, there was often a tendency toward asceticism and the rejection of all material blessings. But it could never stay there. In general, a Christian work ethic will produce overall wealth and prosperity. This is not an inviolable rule like water flowing downhill. There are exceptions, and God will often test and refine the faithful in the area of wealth by bringing unexpected trials and hardships. On the whole, though, if you produce more than you consume, save, invest your savings into tools that help you produce even more efficiently, and trade with other people who are doing the same thing and specializing in other areas, you will become more wealthy

⁵ Genesis 3:15

⁶ Larry Stephenson is a former NFL quarterback and about 6'5". I am 5'8".

than if you consume more than you produce, borrow, and party like a prodigal. The more consistently Christian your work ethic is, the more likely it is to result in wealth. It doesn't matter how many vows of poverty you've taken. Wealth brings all kinds of new problems and temptations. The wealthy man is tempted to forget the Lord in his pride like Nabal⁷ or the Pharaoh that knew neither Joseph nor the Lord⁸. "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him?" they say in their pride as they gaze at their (mostly inherited) wealth and delude themselves into thinking that they have provided for themselves in an autonomous fashion. Indeed we must pray that our wisdom always exceeds our wealth so that we know how to remain faithful and resist the temptations associated with it. The book of Proverbs is an ideal place to seek such wisdom.

Context

The book of Proverbs is a commentary of sorts on the Law. It is not tedious or exhaustive like the Internal Revenue Code, though. This portion of Proverbs, the first section of "The Proverbs of Solomon" starts in chapter 10 and continues until 22:16. Solomon uses vivid, memorable metaphors to present the principles of the Law of God in a manner that will help us understand and remember it. Generally each verse is presented as a couplet: the first and second parts of the verse either present a contrast (like today's text "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.") or a parallel presentation (like Proverbs 11:22 "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.")

The book of Proverbs is an example of faithful obedience to the greatest commandment, found in

Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

The book of Proverbs is fruit of careful obedience to this greatest commandment. The writers of this book, which include at least Solomon, Agur (who might be Jacob writing under a pseudonym⁹), and Lemuel, meditated upon the Word of God day and night and gained wisdom from it. The first section of the book is written from a father to a son about our need for wisdom which begins with the fear of the Lord. Solomon, in particular, was able to distill important concepts from the Law of God into pithy proverbs that are themselves avenues of wisdom and rewarding to those who meditate upon them. We have the added benefit of being able to meditate upon the Prophets, and the New Testament. This doesn't make the pursuit of wisdom easy, but it is

7 1 Samuel 25

8 Exodus 1:8ff

9 For an able presentation of this viewpoint, see James Jordan "Advice from A Sojourner" a three-part audio series available at <http://www.wordmp3.com/search.aspx?search=advice+from+a+sojourner>

easier now than it was then.

Throughout the book of Proverbs, the wise and the foolish are often contrasted. Chapter 11 shifts the focus slightly by comparing the just with the unjust. It is clear that the wise and the just are to be associated with each other as well as the foolish with the unjust. Justness or unjustness are essentially what you get when you mix wisdom or foolishness with power. When an ordinary fool acquires power, wealth and/or influence, he is now foolish *and* unjust.

Our text for today is a commentary on three parallel passages of the Law of God:

Leviticus 19:11-14:

'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

'You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:35-37:

'You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

'Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am the LORD.'"

Deuteronomy 25:13-15:

"You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God.

You will note that the first section of Leviticus 19 we looked at is more generally dealing with fraud and the second two provide a more specific prohibition against dishonest weights and measures. Since our text today presents the unjust use of dishonest scales first, we will begin with the unjust fool.

Dishonest Scales

In most cases, the use of dishonest scales (or any manner of measurement in trade) is a sin committed by the powerful against the simple, the naïve, or the sojourner. This particular sin often transcends mere fraud and becomes outright oppression. As I stated earlier, the merchant or seller is more likely to be the one committing the transgression of this commandment. By using dishonest measures a specialist in the field who is selling a product or service is preying upon the ignorance of his customer. He is putting a stumbling block before the blind and cursing the deaf.

Dishonest scales are no peripheral matter or peccadillo. The Triune God, Whom we serve, takes this very seriously. The use of dishonest scales is here called an abomination. The Hebrew word used here for

abomination is “to'evah.¹⁰” Some other sins that this word is used to describe are sodomy,¹¹ burning your sons and daughters in the fire for false gods,¹² enticing your neighbors to serve false gods,¹³ and witchcraft.¹⁴ These abominations are closely associated with the practices of the Canaanites, who were vomited out of the land. As the Deuteronomy 25 passage we looked at earlier shows, avoiding these abominations would lengthen the days of Israel in the land. In both of the proverbs paralleling the negative half of today's text, the same word for “abomination” is used. Proverbs 20:10 states, “Diverse weights and diverse measures, They are both alike, an abomination to the LORD.” Later in chapter 20, verse 23 states, “Diverse weights are an abomination to the LORD, And dishonest scales are not good.”

Very often a person who uses dishonest weights and measures gets away with his crime in this life. Fools who practice this sin act as if even the Lord does not see them.¹⁵ They live as if there is no coming final judgment on the last day when there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. This is a symptom of brazen unbelief and overweening pride. They deny that the God who causes nations to rise and fall can thwart their petty schemes. Ananias and Sapphira¹⁶ thought that they could lie to God and skim from the sale of a plot of land devoted to the Lord. Achan thought he could steal a garment, some silver, and some gold from that which was under the ban¹⁷, but God is not mocked. Both of these abominations were avenged, and the offenders lost everything.

During the reign of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom, the same time that Jonah was ministering, the Lord revealed to Amos the coming wrath and judgment against the abominations of Israel:

Amos 8:1-10:

Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, “Amos, what do you see?”

So I said, “A basket of summer fruit.”

Then the LORD said to me:

“The end has come upon My people Israel;

I will not pass by them anymore.

And the songs of the temple

Shall be wailing in that day,”

Says the Lord GOD –

“Many dead bodies everywhere,

They shall be thrown out in silence.”

תועבת10

11 Leviticus 18:22, 20:13

12 Deuteronomy 12:31

13 Deuteronomy 13:14, 17:4

14 Deuteronomy 18:10-11

15 Psalm 73:11

16 Acts 5:1-11

17 Joshua 7:10-26

*Hear this, you who swallow up the needy,
And make the poor of the land fail,*

Saying:

*“ When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
That we may trade wheat?
Making the ephah small and the shekel large,
Falsifying the scales by deceit,
That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals –
Even sell the bad wheat?”*

*The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
“ Surely I will never forget any of their works.
Shall the land not tremble for this,
And everyone mourn who dwells in it?
All of it shall swell like the River,
Heave and subside
Like the River of Egypt.*

*“ And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD,
“That I will make the sun go down at noon,
And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;
I will turn your feasts into mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist,
And baldness on every head;
I will make it like mourning for an only son,
And its end like a bitter day.*

And the Lord did avenge the abominations committed against him. In 722 B.C., God used Assyria and their king Shalmaneser, a people who had repented a generation earlier at the preaching of Jonah, to judge Israel and carry them into captivity as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would do to the Southern Kingdom of Judah 136 years later in 586 B.C. When those oppressed by deceitful weights and measures cry out to the Lord, He will hear their cry and save them. He will visit judgment upon the oppressors.

Beloved, we must be on our guard for those today who would use false weights and measures against us, and against widows, orphans, and sojourners. We need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.¹⁸ We

¹⁸ Matthew 10:16

especially need to guard against the temptation to be conformed to the world¹⁹ around us as they practice such things, and not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.²⁰ We need to be wary of doing whatever it takes to get ahead, as if the Lord did not rule from heaven, as if He were not sovereign over every inch of human existence. The Lord sees every cut corner, every trinket pilfered from the office, every item sold knowing it is damaged without disclosing it. Be wary of con artists and deals that seem too good to be true—they often are.

Also note that the appearance of precision in measurement does not necessarily guarantee that it is honest. If you were a clever crook running a gas station, for example, would you want your dishonest gas pump to be one of those rotary dials that shows eight gallons and halfway between the 4 and the 5, or would you want it to appear so precise that it can measure to the thousandth of a gallon while intentionally calibrating it to make the “gallon” smaller than it really is or adulterating the gasoline with a cheaper substance?

I believe there is also a strong correlation with the Sabbath here. This isn't a fail-safe, of course. You could theoretically have somebody who is closed on Sundays to try and attract and swindle Christians the other six days of the week, but the Lord's Day is so widely ignored in our culture today that it's not really credible as a common threat here and now—or at least it's not credible unless the proprietor is a professing evangelical. More on that later... There are also some “ox-in-a-ditch²¹” vocations like emergency medicine and the like that are going to be open on Sundays because people get hurt and sick on Sundays. If you're bleeding to death, it can't wait until Monday. All things being equal, though, a business that doesn't trust the Lord to provide for them a day of rest each week will be less likely to fear God's retribution for dishonest weights and measures or shoddy work.

As I stated earlier, the powerful and influential are more tempted and more likely to violate the prohibition against dishonest weights and measures than the downtrodden. We should be especially suspicious of unbelieving civil magistrates and the fraud they might perpetrate against unsuspecting subjects. Around the same time that Amos was prophesying in the Northern Kingdom, Isaiah was called to a similar ministry in the Southern Kingdom.

Isaiah 1:21-23:

How the faithful city has become a harlot!

It was full of justice;

Righteousness lodged in it,

But now murderers.

Your silver has become dross,

Your wine mixed with water.

Your princes are rebellious,

19 See Romans 12:1

20 Compare Romans 1:32

21 See Luke 13:10-17 and 14:1-6

And companions of thieves;

Everyone loves bribes,

And follows after rewards.

They do not defend the fatherless,

Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

Very often, kings, rulers, or governments own their own mints. Wars and “bread and circus” welfare programs are not cheap, and outright taxation has never been popular. As a way around this, dishonest rulers have sought to indirectly confiscate wealth by debasing money and issuing a decree that the money had to trade at full value. This is known as “fiat money,” and can either be a dishonest coin or something like a piece of paper that has no intrinsic value at all. Since ancient times, whenever a coin circulated through the treasury of an unjust ruler, he would either shave off portions of the coins, using techniques known as clipping or sweating, and mint more coins with the shavings. Or he would re-mint every coin, debasing it by mixing a less valuable metal with the precious metal. For example, at the time of Christ, the Roman Denarius was about 97% pure silver. By A.D. 253, it was 35%.²² Their silver had literally become dross. A biblical example of gold becoming dross can be found in 1 Kings 14:25-28, during the reign of Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt came and plundered Jerusalem. He took away all the gold shields that King Solomon made. Rehoboam, replaced these with bronze shields. If they were polished really well and you were standing really far away on a cloudy day, you might not even have noticed.

Up until the printing press was invented, there were substantial physical limitations on just how much and how quickly money could be debased. Since then, there have unfortunately been many advances dishonest money. Because actual gold or silver can be inconvenient to physically carry around and made you a target for brigands, people began warehousing their money with goldsmiths. The goldsmith would issue a paper receipt to the customer and charge a warehousing fee to protect the gold or silver. These receipts would initially exchange at the same value as the gold or silver they represented. Before long, however, some dishonest smiths realized that nobody ever came in for their gold and silver at the same time. These smiths started issuing more receipts than they had gold on hand in the form of loans, and the fraudulent modern practice of fractional reserve banking was born. Even here, though, there were limits. If people suspected that their banker was dishonest, they would come to get their money, and there would be a run on the bank. The smith would go bankrupt, and have to pay restitution if there was a godly magistrate around. The damage would be localized to the area around the bad bank.

This ended when ungodly rulers saw that they could take advantage of the situation. I'll be simplifying a bit here for the sake of brevity. These rulers granted monopoly privileges to a single bank or a cartel of banks to print fiat money. That newly created money would be lent to the rulers, who would spend it first before the

²² Source: <http://www.archaeologystudent.com/coinarch/paper3.htm> . For a great resource on the topic for all ages, see [Whatever Happened to Penny Candy](#) by Richard J. Maybury.

prices adjusted for the devaluation of the money. This practice, known as central banking was responsible for financing two of the five bloodiest wars in recorded history,²³ and periods of hyperinflation in about 30 countries in the 20th century alone that confiscated and utterly destroyed the savings denominated in that currency and often led to bloody revolution.²⁴ Even here at home, while we haven't experienced anything that meets the official definition of hyperinflation, the dollar has lost about 96% of its purchasing power since 1913. Compare this to the Roman Empire where it took about 300 years for the currency to lose 65% of its value. Though I'm tempted to launch here into a full-fledged Jeremiad against the evils of the Federal Reserve system, fiat money, and a borrowing government that is about as credit worthy as an impulse gambler, I will mostly refrain. Suffice it to say, our own government has been one of the greatest offenders when it comes to unjust weights and measures, and our silver has become dross. If you don't believe me, look closely at a dime or a quarter after the service. The richest nation in the world, where a majority of the people profess to be Christians, should heed the warnings of the Apostle James.

James 5:1-7:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Need for a Savior

Our God is not like this. His Law is itself the greatest example of a just measure. When He judges, he does not make the shekel large and the ephah small. And who is there that has kept this commandment about just weights and measures perfectly? Who among us has never cut a corner while doing a chore for our parents, defrauded a sibling out of the use of a toy that we wanted to play with, violated a contract, pretended to be “working” at our jobs, cheated on a test, cheated at a game? Do I need to continue?

Anybody who honestly looks at his life in relation to God's Law is going to come up short. *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN*: We have been weighed, we have been measured, and we have been found wanting.²⁵ “There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no,

²³ Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_anthropogenic_disasters_by_death_toll#Wars_and_armed_conflicts
Using the low estimates, World War II is first on the list and World War I is fifth.

²⁴ Source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperinflation#Examples_of_hyperinflation see especially, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Krajina, Republika Srpska, Yugoslavia, and Zaire.

²⁵ See Daniel 5:25-28

not one."²⁶ "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way."²⁷

But while we were a long way off,²⁸ our Father had compassion upon us. He gave His only begotten Son, as the prophets foretold. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, like you and me. We, who were at one time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, we who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.²⁹ It is He who has kept this commandment about just weights and measures, and every other one, perfectly. He was weighed in the balance of God's Law, He was measured against a standard of perfect righteousness, and death was found wanting. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.³⁰ You see, this really is a Christmas sermon after all.

A Just Weight

We can come now to the second part of this couplet, "But a just weight is His delight." God delights in a just weight. We must see this through the lens of being a redeemed people. We must never try to put the cart before the horse. As the parallel Proverb 16:11 to this part of today's text reminds us, "Honest weights and scales are the LORD's; All the weights in the bag are His work." We seek to delight God in our business dealings by using just weights and measures because we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We must always see our good works in the context of being justified by faith in Jesus Christ.³¹ I mentioned earlier that a Christian work ethic leading to wealth and prosperity has exceptions. Justification by faith in Christ leading to good works doesn't. This is *more sure* than water flowing downhill. You cannot be redeemed by the blood of Christ and be indifferent about pleasing God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. Will we ever do it perfectly this side of glorification? Of course not! Will we stumble, stagger and limp? You bet! Confess your sin, get your eyes back on Jesus, and get back to the business of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever!³²

After the Reformation took hold in France, there was a proverb, "Honest as a Huguenot." The Huguenots, the French Calvinists, were so well known for having the highest degree of honesty and integrity that even their enemies used the maxim. This is certainly something we should strive to emulate. "Honest as a Kirker" even has a nice ring to it. We need to make sure that integrity in our dealings in the community, both within and without the Church, is non-negotiable. Will your customers and business partners, notice? Maybe. But God certainly will. You can take a loss in your business that is still a profit in the eyes of God.

²⁶ Romans 3:10-13

²⁷ Isaiah 53:6

²⁸ Luke 15:20

²⁹ See Ephesians 2:11-13

³⁰ Matthew 21:42, Psalm 118:22-23, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, see also 1 Peter 2:4-8

³¹ See Ephesians 2:8-10

³² See Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1

Be especially mindful to have honest business dealings within the church. Review the section in the Church directory titled "Principles for Doing Business with Brothers." In the upper room, Jesus gave a new commandment to us: we are to love one another as He has loved us. If we remember this commandment, the very thought of cheating one another should be absolutely repulsive to us, like eating a bowl full of cockroaches. Sadly, this is not the reputation of American churches today. The sad fact is that you might be more likely to be ripped off by a professing evangelical in this country than a guy picked randomly out of the telephone book, especially if *he* knows *you're* a professing evangelical. Beloved, you do not want the other Christians you know to nickname you Laban behind your back. I would recommend reading Genesis 29-31 around your tables this week, and make a New Year's resolution to be the polar opposite of that scoundrel.

Finally, as a redeemed people, be sure to faithfully return the tithe of your increase to the Lord. This month begins with "J," so make it a priority to see to it that God gets paid first. This is the hallmark of Christian financial discipline. It acknowledges that the Lord owns all 100% of our increase and we are merely stewards over it for His glory. These are uncertain economic times, but they present an opportunity for the church to minister to those in need. "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given."³³ Ultimately we need to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.³⁴ Meditate upon the Word of God, seek wisdom, pray, invest yourself in the fellowship of the saints around you. All of our stuff will perish some day, but the people of God, assembled together today are going to be around for eternity. If we do that, we will be able to face 2011 and beyond regardless of the external circumstances. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your lovingkindness and mercy toward us. Surely they will follow us all the days of our lives. Please bless this year, and let it be one of spiritual growth for all of us, that our love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that we may approve the things that are excellent, that we may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, Who taught us to pray... (Lord's Prayer)

33 Proverbs 19:17

34 Matthew 6:20