

Focused on 'Dust' No More

BY PASTOR LLOYD PULLEY



Today we will look at one of the most tragic events in all of Scripture.

Adam and Eve have sinned against God, and receive the hefty consequences for their sin. God tells Adam, ***"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"*** (Genesis 3:19). God then sends Adam from the Garden of Eden ***to till the ground from which he was taken*** (verse 23b). What a miserable picture.

Here is Adam, who once enjoyed sweet fellowship with God. This same Adam with the very breath of life breathed into him was called to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it. And he was given extraordinary ability to fulfill that calling—exceptional intelligence and a helper designed from him, for him.

But after the fall, Adam is bereft of his communion with God. He is sent out of the garden of Eden, and God set cherubim and a flaming sword to prevent him from ever going back to that place of fellowship. Now he must till the dust in sweat, hardship, and sorrow. Picture the futility of that—a lifetime consumed with dust.

Adam was made from dust and was returning to it. Essentially God was giving Adam a picture of life apart from communion with the Almighty. God was saying, "Adam, your lot in life is dust now. That is your entire existence."

Now Adam must make his food from the dust. He must make his clothes from the dust. He is going to find his existence in dust. He is going to collect different kinds of dust. He is going to love his dust, care for his dust. He is going to dust his dust!

This is the life of natural man upon this earth. So much of his time, his energy, his effort, and his resources are spent tending to dust, being focused on dust. He becomes

consumed with dust. This is the definition of futility. Something somewhere within us longs for more significance, but we are preoccupied with dust.

However, something wonderful happened with Adam and Eve—even amidst the curse. Here in this dusty mess, God promises a Deliverer. God declares that a Seed would come who would one day deliver His people from their dust-filled existence.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."
Genesis 3:15

And as promised, the Deliverer Jesus has come! He has undone the deeds of the devil. He has gone before us, conquered, and afforded us reentry into the garden, so to speak. Jesus, who alone was worthy, has restored to us that fellowship with God that we lost to sin.

As Christians, we have access to that sweet fellowship with God that Adam lost at the fall. We have the very breath of spiritual life restored to us through the Holy Spirit. With this renewed relationship with God, we gain perspective that all these temporal things around us are nothing but dust.

And yet, I stand in wonder at myself that—even with all these ***"spiritual blessing[s] in the heavenly places in Christ"*** (Ephesians 1:3b)—I am still so often preoccupied with, and pay way too much attention to, things that are really dust! Why do I think so much about my house, my car, my things—my dust?

And [Jesus] said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in

the abundance of the things he possesses."
Luke 12:15

Now, we do have to live in this world, provide for our families, and pay our bills. After all, we are still made of dust, connected to this world, and need to tend to the affairs of this life to some degree. The problem is that we often give so much attention to this dust that we forget the wonderful spiritual inheritance we have received.

So let's not neglect so great a salvation by going back to the dust. I can't imagine a more futile, empty life. I hope that we can look around us—at our houses and earthly possessions—and say, "This is dust. It's nice dust, but it's dust."

With this renewed relationship with God, we gain perspective that all these temporal things around us are nothing but dust.

Let's get our hearts and minds focused on the things that are eternal. Let's make a critical difference in the lives of others while there is still time. Our lives are designed to be so much more than dust—thanks to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:2

Let us be free from the things of this world, as Martin Luther wrote in *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*: "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also." ☞

Lloyd Pulley is senior pastor of CC Old Bridge, NJ. He has authored three books, including Patient Evangelism, and has a daily radio program called Bridging the Gap.