

Reversal of Fortune
Joseph Herrin (05-15-2012)

I was reading an article on Forbes magazine's website recently and came across the following statement.

"There are 2 billion people moving from bicycles to mopeds to cars, and that's just in India and China."

[S o u r c e :
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2012/04/03/ethanol-minus-the-corn-it-could-fuel-america-if-it-werent-illegal/>]

When I read this I considered that the Father has been leading me in the opposite direction. Last year I sold my van. I then purchased a motorcycle as a replacement vehicle. I later sold it (after being run into by an elderly woman). I prayed about getting a car after this, though I really did not want one. I told the Father that if He did not foresee a need for me to have a car, I would prefer to not have one. I have an aversion to acquiring too much stuff. If I bought a car I would have to buy tags for it, pay for insurance, put gas in it, and perform maintenance to keep it running well. I truly desire to be unencumbered in this world. I don't want to devote any more time, thought, and energy to worldly possessions than is necessary. I am reminded of the following words in Scripture.

I Corinthians 7:29-32

But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be free from concern...

The time is indeed shortened. We would do well to unburden ourselves from as much of this world and its goods as possible. I am fully persuaded that those who do so now, voluntarily, will be glad they did in the days of economic turmoil that are close at hand.



My Bicycle

As I prayed about the need of a car, I told the Father that I would be very happy if I could get by with just my bicycle for local transportation. It does not require tags. I am not required to carry insurance on it. It never has to stop at a gas station. Repairs are minimal and much less expensive than a car. I also enjoy riding a bike and doing so gives me some much needed exercise.

The Father has led me to stay in RV Parks near, or in, small towns. This has enabled me to be able to ride my bike to the store, the library, the post office, Walmart, or other places. You would be surprised how quickly these miles add up even when the distances are not great. In the week and a half since my return from Jekyll Island while I was still in Perry, Georgia I put over sixty miles on my bicycle. I have put about 300 miles on the bike in the past 6 weeks, and all of that was done with a broken leg and wearing a protective boot.

I have done some bike trading recently. I gave the panniers (storage bags) I had been using on my bicycle to Randy Simmons, and I opted to get baskets instead. The baskets hold more, and they are not harmed if they get wet. I don't normally do my shopping in the rain, so getting my groceries or other items wet is not an issue. The baskets can be detached from the bike and carried into the store for shopping. In this way I can be assured that I don't purchase more than I can carry back with me. I just put the baskets in a shopping cart and fill them up. When I am through I go hang them back on my bicycle.



I can carry 40 pounds at a time in the baskets very comfortably. At the time I was praying about getting a car, or using only my bicycle, someone sent me a letter with the following stamp on it.



Ride a Bike Forever

It truly arrested my attention when I saw this stamp. I had never seen this particular stamp before. For it to show up as I was praying about this matter struck me as providential. I did not know conclusively that this was a word of direction from the Father, but I expressed to Yahweh that I was quite content if this was His counsel.

Yahweh has revealed to me that a remnant of His people must experience similar things to that which He has led me through during the past 12 years. Part of my calling is to encourage the saints to embrace and understand that which is ahead of them. Many of the creature comforts they have known must be surrendered. Like the Israelites who left Egypt to journey through the wilderness, the body of Christ will be called upon to endure with contentment a less comfortable lifestyle.

Some will perceive this to be a reversal of fortunes. People who have never known luxury and prosperity think very little of the hardships they endure. Indeed, many do not think of their experiences as hardships. It is just normal, everyday experience to them. However, those who leave affluence and enter into a more rigorous experience often find it difficult to not make comparison to the lives they once had.

Numbers 11:5-6

"We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna."

Waaaahhh!!!

Back in 1999 I was living in a 2,000 square foot house with a yard that was about 3/4 of an acre in size. I had a detached garage stuffed full of possessions. I was a typical American consumer. When the Father challenged me to surrender to be led wherever He would take me I found that a drastic downsizing was to follow. We sold the house and furnishings, and after some months the Father had my family of four living in a 28' motorhome that we were able to pay cash for. All we owned fit in the motorhome.

Since that time my wife has left me, and my children are grown and out on their own. Yahweh has led me through many more experiences, living a life of subsistence, looking for Him to come through daily. I have known days of hunger, and exposure to the elements. I have walked through fearful places. In all of it the Father has carried me through and I was able to express gratitude for His comfort and care all along the way.

After many years of lesser things, the Father has now given me a bus to live in. Having known much less, I am extremely thankful. Yet, there are some, like the woman who wrote me a few weeks ago, who would despise what the Father has chosen for me. This woman said, "I would have to agree with your wife. I would hate to live in a bus like you do." Incidentally, my wife never lived in the bus, and she was content when we had a smaller motorhome, so this sister in Christ spoke rather presumptuously.

My bus has about 200 square feet of living space, and only recently did the Father direct me to get a 16 foot trailer, which gives me about another 100 square feet of storage. This is

living large for me. The previous 6-7 years I had only a camper van, and for the past two years an 8 foot trailer that had 40 square feet of storage.

My attitude has been one of contentment, even great thanksgiving, both when I had the van, and now that I have the bus. There was a season when I lived out of a car for five months. Following this, in 2005 the Father led me to go to a rescue mission. I was homeless at the time. I was offered a position as Resident Manager overseeing the men enrolled in an alcohol and drug abuse recovery program. I was given a room in the men's dorm. It was approximately 100 square feet. This, along with \$100 a week, was my pay for the entire time that I held the position. I ate my meals in the cafeteria with the men, and I was very thankful for all that Yahweh provided for me.

Having previously lived a middle class lifestyle, what the Father led me into was quite a step down as far as material possessions and creature comforts were concerned. Yet, I did not consider these things to be hardships. Being in a downtown environment, and interacting with the homeless, I was aware that there were many who were less fortunate.

It has been about fifteen years since I owned a car that had air conditioning in it. Living in Georgia, the vast majority of people drive with their windows rolled up and their air conditioner running. I have learned to drive with my windows down, and be content with the breeze. I found that this was not difficult to adjust to. The heat never seemed unbearable. Man can adapt to a wide variety of experiences. Attitude plays a critical role.

I have read the book titled *Endurance - Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* more than once. It provides an account of Sir Ernest Shackleton's voyage to Antarctica just as World War I was starting. The twenty-some odd men that went with him were stranded when their ship was locked into the ice. They spent nearly a year on board before the ice floes crushed the ship. Then they camped in tents on top of the floating ice. They had wool, or reindeer sleeping bags, and would lay them right on the ice. The tents warmed the ice and water would puddle under the sleeping bags. The men slept in wet sleeping bags on top of an ice floe for months. They endured more than 500 days in this frozen environment before they were rescued.

When I think of the conditions of these men, and their hardiness, the life of the typical American looks very soft indeed. Yet, Christians will very quickly give complaint at the most minor inconveniences. Paul exhorted Timothy with the following words:

II Timothy 2:3

Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Yahshua.

Paul gave this further testimony regarding his attitude toward the experiences God chose for him.

Philippians 4:11-13

I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and

suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I wonder how the saints will respond to those things the Spirit is indicating to be coming? Even now they are on the horizon. There is a wilderness experience for the sons and daughters of God to pass through. The abundance and comforts of Egypt will be removed. Yahweh will test His people with hunger, thirst, heat, cold, fears, and many trials. Will they murmur and complain like the Israelites who journeyed toward Canaan, or will they trust Yahweh and manifest thankfulness in all things?

I Thessalonians 5:18

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Yahshua.

I have recently been corresponding with a sister in Christ who was asking me about solar systems for use with a house or an RV. This led to a very interesting conversation, and it touched on some things that have been weighing on my mind of late. I told this sister that it would be impractical, and prohibitively expensive (at least in my mind), to equip a typical home or RV with a solar electric back-up system to run off of batteries. The common home is constructed and outfitted with the assumption that there will always be a steady availability of abundant and inexpensive electrical power.

I have been working toward independence from the power grid since I have been in my bus. When I outfitted it I intentionally left as many windows as possible accessible so they could be lowered to get a breeze inside. I put screens on the outside of all of these windows. There is also a screened vent in the roof to let hot air out, and the front door opens and also has a screen door. When I open the door and windows there is a lot of air circulation. I also painted the exterior white, and I used a ceramic additive on the roof to insulate against heat. More recently I replaced the black paint on the windows with mirrored reflective tint which further cuts down on heat absorption.

In contrast, many of today's homes are sealed tight. Windows are small, and some do not open. Houses are not laid out for air to circulate. They are designed to be closed up and the air conditioner or heater turned on. In coming days of economic and social upheaval, there will undoubtedly be some disruptions to the power supply. Also, people who are out of work cannot pay for large utility expenses. Those who have lived the softest lives, most dependent upon the comforts of modern living, will suffer the most.

I shared with this sister that the best place to start to design a solar system is in making one's living environment more energy efficient. It is much less expensive to replace power hungry appliances than it is to buy enough batteries and solar panels to run everything. Since I have been in the bus I replaced all of the incandescent bulbs with LED lights. LED lights do cost more initially, but they consume about 1/10th of the power of incandescents.

I have a stove and oven that runs off of propane. I have found that I can cook for nearly a year on one tank of propane that costs me about \$30 to refill. There is a microwave oven in the bus, but I would not use it if I were off the grid and using only solar electric power. Neither would I use my toaster, blender, bread maker, crock pot, or Panini grill. These appliances simply consume too much electricity. I have been planning for alternative

cooking methods.

Much of my cooking is of the crock pot variety. Beans take a long time to cook, as does whole grain rice. I have purchased a solar oven to use in place of the crock pot. Anything you can cook in a crock pot will cook very well in a solar oven. Bread and baked goods also do very well.



SOS Solar Sport Oven

The oven pictured above is the one I own. It comes with the two 3.4 quart pots shown. That gives room for a lot of cooking. The oven will reach over 300 degrees with the attached reflectors shown on top of it, or up to 260 degrees without them. You can read about and view videos on this oven at the following link.

<http://www.solarovens.org/>

There are days, however, when the sun is not shining, and some things just cook better over an open flame such as is provided on a stove top. For those days I have a Rocket Stove. These amazing appliances burn small pieces of wood, even twigs, and are extremely efficient. They reach intense temperatures due to their design, heating up quickly and cooking rapidly. The temperature is controlled by how much wood you are feeding into it.



Zoom Dura - Rocket Stove

You can read about this amazing little stove at the following website.

<http://www.provident-living-today.com/Rocket-Stove.html>

An interesting observation is that both of these products are utilized by people in third world nations where electricity is not readily available. At this time, there are a growing number of Americans who are purchasing these items, and using them. This does seem like a reversal of fortunes. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. As people in nations such as India and China are greatly advancing in their standard of living, I believe that many in the first world nations will be brought to poverty. Can we be as content to live as they once did, being thankful for what we do have, no matter how meager?

By relying on these simple, non-electric appliances, I can power my bus with a solar system relatively inexpensively. The only appliance I would really want to be able to run on electric, other than my laptop computer, is my refrigerator. Being an RV fridge, it is fairly efficient. It is rated at 2.7 amps (Compare this to 13 amps for a microwave oven). Beyond this, I would want to run lights and a couple of 12 volt fans.

I spoke to a man at a solar company today and he did a quick calculation of my power needs based on what I told him. He told me that my daily power needs would be approximately 144 amp hours. That sounded like a very symbolic number to me. This amount is a small percentage of what a regular home, or even a standard RV, would consume. I am praying to see if the Father would have me to have a solar system to run these things. I am content with whatever He chooses. Where He directs He provides.

I believe it would be well for the saints to streamline their lifestyles now. Get used to living with fewer creature comforts. You will find it far easier to adjust in days ahead. Doing so is also a spiritual test. Yahweh led the Israelites through the wilderness for a reason. He sought to transform fleshly men and women into spiritual. He wanted them to place more attention on doing the will of God than living a comfortable life pleasing to their flesh. Their constant murmuring and complaint revealed their lack of conformity to Christ. Tough times reveal the character of a person.

The sister I had corresponded with about the solar system is in her sixties and has had some health problems. Yet, for an American Christian she is very atypical in her attitude toward creature comforts. She shared with me the following:

I believe our energy requirements would be comparable to yours. I've planned to cook using a grill, solar oven and we have some stored propane. I would like to have enough power for some refrigeration, lights and fans as you've mentioned....

I know what it's like to try and sleep in a hot house. For the past 8-10 years I've tried to be conservative. I never turned the ac on before May (She lives in South Carolina). One time I waited until July. The temperature has been in the low 90's inside of the house before we've turned it on. If we had had a screened porch we would have slept outside. The mosquito's are terrible here. In the winter, we normally keep the thermostat set on 40-50 degrees (we have natural gas heat) and just spot heat with small electric heaters and put on extra clothing. Although we can afford to keep the house at a comfortable temperature year round, we don't. I believe it has been to prepare us for a time when we

won't have these luxuries.

Since the Father directed me to purchase the trailer I recently acquired, I have been pondering the name of the manufacturer that is on it. My last trailer had a significant name, and I believe this one does to. Yahweh has indicated that this trailer is to be used during a wilderness experience. Following is what is written on the trailer.



What is the Spirit speaking to you? Are you listening to God's voice? It is so easy to be caught up in the world system, to always assume that our lives will grow more prosperous, and that days of ease and comfort will continue. Yahweh has called His disciples to follow an afflicted path that leads to life. The hour is near at hand for many to enter into a wilderness experience. Will your attitude be such that you can follow where God leads without complaint? Will you be able to give thanks in all things?

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.