

Those who derive such ideas from this verse do so by taking one phrase entirely out of context. It has been well said that "a text without a context is only a pretext." Proper interpretation requires that the words, "subdue it," be understood as subordinate to what precedes. The verse says: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it . . ." It is obvious that in this verse the stress is laid on populating the earth and that the phrase "subdue it" simply refers to cultivating the ground so that it will provide food for the increasing population. Such an emphasis on the responsibility to multiply was natural at a time when the world contained only two persons. Now that multitudes fill almost every part of the globe, it is rather absurd to consider this command to Adam as being a primary indication of the duty of present-day Christians.

God's people have a right to enjoy all the good things that His world contains. Nothing that God created is bad in itself. However, man has fallen, and Satan has become the prince of this world. Occasionally some portion of human culture becomes so polluted by Satan that the Christian has to abstain for a time from participating in it. In the millennium all culture will be cleansed and man will be able to enjoy every part of it.

Whenever we can make world conditions better in some respect, we should do so. We should remember, however, that this is always secondary. Our primary duty here is to witness to Christ and to wait for His return.

We can be sure that nothing would please Satan more than for Christians to remove their attention from the primary duty of witnessing to Christ and winning souls out of this wicked world and instead to try to fulfill the impossible dream of doing by human strength what God has promised that His Son will do when He sets up His universal kingdom of peace and happiness.