Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Single-Minded Christian
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Your view of money and material possessions is an effective barometer of your spirituality. Wealth is neither good nor bad in itself--corrupt people put it to evil use, Christians can use it for righteous ends. But what you do with the money God gives you is a reflection of your thinking. As Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

The Bible does not forbid the possession of money. In fact, many in the Bible--Job (Job 1:3), Abraham (Genesis 13:2), Isaac (Genesis 26:12-13), Jacob (Genesis 30:43), Boaz (Ruth 2:1), and Solomon (1 Kings 10:23)--were extremely wealthy as a result of God's blessing. But the Bible does forbid an *affection* formoney with this warning: "the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10).

When you love money and things, you will forget God (Proverbs 30:9), trust your riches rather than Him (Job 31:24-28), buy in to deception (Mark 4:19), compromise convictions (2 Timothy 4:10), be proud (Deuteronomy 8:14), steal from God (Malachi 3:8), and ignore the needs of others (1 John 3:17). Love of wealth and possessions will cause you to pursue them illegitimately by stealing (Ephesians 4:28)--whether through force (1 Kings 21:1-16), through fraud (Amos 8:5), or through usury (Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 28:8)--or by gambling, an irrational trust in chance rather than the kind providence of God.

If you want to avoid the sins that accompany the love of money, Jesus prescribes a single-minded attitude toward wealth and possessions. And in Matthew chapter 6 He commands us to store up a single treasure, maintain a single vision, serve a single master, and seek a single goal.

- "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (vv. 19-20).

It is right to provide for your family, make reasonable plans for the future, make wise investments, and have money to carry on a business, give to the poor, and support the Lord's work. It is being dishonest, greedy, covetous, stingy, and miserly about what God gives you that is wrong. To honestly

earn, save, and give is wise and good; to hoard and spend only on yourself is not only unwise, but sinful as well.

The key to Jesus' warning here is "yourselves." When you accumulate possessions simply for your own sake--whether to hoard or to spend selfishly and extravagantly--those possessions have become idols. But when you wisely, lovingly, willingly, and generously use things for kingdom purposes, you can turn them into a means of accumulating heavenly possessions.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote:

You are to remember with the passion burning within you that you are not the child of to-day. You are not of the earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of Deity. The measurements of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where blue sky kisses green earth. All the fact of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite. If you make your fortune on the earth--poor, sorry, silly soul--you have made a fortune, and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning. (*The Gospel According to Matthew* [New York: Revell, 1929], 64-65)

- "if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light" (v. 22).

The eye here is an illustration of the heart--it is the lamp, or lens, through which all light comes to you. The eye is like a window which, when clear, allows light to shine through, but, when dirty, or bad, prevents light from entering. If your eye is bad, if it is diseased or damaged, no light can enter and the whole body will be full of darkness.

The heart is the eye of the soul, through which the illumination of every spiritual experience shines. It is through your heart that God's truth, love, peace, and every other spiritual blessing comes to you. When your heart--your spiritual vision--is clear, then your whole body will be full of light. But if your heart is diseased and damaged, being encumbered with an affection for stuff, it becomes "blind" and insensitive to spiritual things.

A defective eye is a picture of a selfishly indulgent heart--the master of every unbeliever, the tempter of every believer. If you are materialistic and greedy, you may be spiritually blind and not a Christian at all. The eye you trust to discern true light may be, in reality, fooling you--you think you have light, but you don't. What you interpret as light is really darkness, and because of the self-deception, how great is that darkness!

If a selfish heart of greed is your master, you must abandon it to follow Jesus Christ. He is the Lord who says, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny Himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). To obey Him is to enjoy the fellowship of God and true believers, a fellowship of light (1 John 1:5-7).

If Christ is truly your Master, you may still be tempted toward materialism. "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Prove yourself to be filled with the love of the Father and keep your eyes clear from the love of temporal things. You will maintain clear vision--eyes that truly see--and enjoy God's gift of light.

- "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (v. 24).

As I observe our culture, it is apparent that many evangelicals don't really believe that verse. Some passively float down the stream of American affluence, others lustily drink it in, never questioning the legitimacy of their confession of God as Master. But the verse above is very black and white. Allegiance to one master *is* hatred toward the other--there is no middle ground.

A slave in Jesus' day was a piece of property, an asset over which the owner had absolute control. For a slave there was no such thing as partial or part-time obligation to his master. His full-time service to his full-time master left no time for service to anyone else. It was not simply difficult, but absolutely impossible to serve two masters.

If you are a Christian, you are a slave of God and righteousness (Romans 6:16-22). You cannot claim Christ as Lord if your heart is tied to anything or anyone else. John Calvin said, "Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority" (*A Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 337).

- "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (v. 33).

If you want to be single-minded about your treasure, your vision, and your Master, you must pursue a single goal--move your thoughts up to the divine level. God wants to free you from the mundane, temporal, passing vanity of this life to seek the things of God. In His right hand are pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11), so "set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2).

The Greek word translated "first" in Matthew 6:33 means "first in a line of more than one option." Of all the priorities of life, seeking God's kingdom is number one. It is doing what you can to promote God's rule over His creation. That includes seeking Christ's rule to be manifest in your life through "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). You seek His kingdom when you long for the return of the King in His millennial glory to establish His kingdom on earth, and to usher in His eternal kingdom.

Jesus is coming, the embodiment of God's perfect righteousness and holiness, and when He comes, "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). That's what it is to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

Christians in this country are blessed with unparalleled affluence, have unprecedented opportunity to pursue the interests of the kingdom, and live under the unwavering gaze of the God who will call each one to account. So what is your heart's preoccupation? Are you more concerned with the kingdom of God or with the things of this world? Think about where you are storing your treasure; consider the condition of your eyesight; contemplate which master you serve; and assess what it is you seek. If you are on the wrong side of His will, return to a single-minded pursuit of His kingdom and His righteousness, and enjoy the blessing of His favor.

Adapted from Matthew 1-7, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

A Single Goal, A Single Master, A Single Vision, A Single Treasure

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