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WHO IS YOUR MASTER?

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No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)

Living in this materialistic society in which many serve the god of riches it is easy for us as believers to lose perspective of God's kingdom on earth. Many people's entire lives are devoted to their careers at such

great sacrifice to their families and health; and often with one goal in mind – to have as much money as possible to squander on their own pleasures. The desire for riches and that which can be bought with money is far greater than their surrender to God and to spiritual things.

✦ **Living in this materialistic society in which many serve the god of riches it is easy for us as believers to lose perspective of God's kingdom on earth.**



I believe that many believers in these last days struggle with serving two masters. The Greek word for master is “Kurios”, and means *proprietor, that which rules over something or someone*. It is either the Lord Jesus Christ or riches. While Christ says that we cannot serve two lords, many think that they can.

► 1. WE CANNOT SERVE TWO LORDS

The Bible is the foundation for understanding the true value of either the one lord or the other. That is why we will first look at some of those values and the consequential blessings they bring.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Is not your life more than food and the body more than clothing? (Matthew 6:24 and 25b)

★ **The god of riches has, to a large degree, crept into Christianity under many different disguises and devilish doctrines of prosperity while leading many hearts away from a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ.**

In the context of this verse Jesus compares heavenly riches to earthly ones and says that our first loyalty and surrender must be to those things that cannot be lost, worn out, or stolen from us; our first loyalty must be to one and only Lord Jesus Christ.

If we are continually fascinated with riches they will take possession of us and become our lord. The god of riches has, to a large degree, crept into Christianity under many different disguises and devilish doctrines of prosperity while leading many hearts away from a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. This is why the hearts of many Christians are cold; the truth of Christ's life and joy no longer dwells in them, rather they have luxurious sanctuaries filled with hi-tech equipment.

Many no longer have a burning desire to serve voluntarily nor are they enthusiastic about expanding God's kingdom because they no longer serve Jesus Christ, instead they serve their own lord – riches. While learning about how to earn more money they sacrifice their families, relationships, and church attendance because every lord desires to have the whole man for himself.

Jesus clearly said: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve*

God and mammon. “(Matthew 6:24) The Greek word for *serve* is *douleuo*, taken from the Greek work *doulos* meaning *servant*. This word describes for us someone in the position of service; someone who is subordinate, who serves another. This word can also be translated as *shackles* or perhaps the word can be used in describing one who is being dictated. This serves also to describe one who is absolutely surrendered without the possibility of being free.

As I mentioned before, some “modern” teachings tell us that riches are a sign of “God’s favor”. Many preachers think that the more they have the more pleasing they are to the Lord; thinking that the more money they have the more secure they are. I am not sure which Bible they have, but according to the Holy Bible this is not necessarily true. Many think that if they would have more money their life would be easier. Is this true, however? Would we really serve Him better with more money?

Let’s look at what Jesus said about riches. While teaching the multitudes on the mountain, a man called out to Him: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” (Luke 12:13) Jesus answered him: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15)

The Greek word for covetousness is *pleonexia*, and we can literally translate this as *lusting or craving for more*. Jesus, then, proceeded to tell a parable illustrating how riches neither give a better life nor eternal security. Many businesses waste millions on advertising to trap us into thinking about their products while promising to give us happiness, fulfillment, and security.

Was the rich man in Luke’s gospel happier, more fulfilled, or more secure because of his accumulated wealth? No, he wasn’t. Actually, God calls him a fool: “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.’ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you

✦ **Preparing for the future is a good thing but not to the neglect of our eternal destination! If we heap up riches yet overlook other’s needs and neglect the kingdom of Heaven it is as if we enter heaven empty handed.**



have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." **(Luke 12:16-21)**

He died before he had a chance to enjoy that which he had accumulated for himself. Preparing for the future is a good thing but not to the neglect of our eternal destination! If we heap up riches yet overlook other's needs and neglect the kingdom of Heaven it is as if we enter heaven empty handed. Jesus Christ severely judged the Pharisees who, while were able, did not reach out to those in need rather they entered heaven empty handed: "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give

★ **How many of Jesus' teachings about riches oppose those pastors whose pride in their big expensive houses, rich church buildings, millions in the bank, and private airplanes; who interpret their success and wealth as a sign of God's favor.**

You drink?' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" **(Matthew 25:37,41)**

In **Luke 16:14** when Jesus spoke of the two lords, the Pharisees ridiculed Him: "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him."

The reason for this was they believed that blessings from God confirmed their faithfulness in keeping the law. They viewed Jesus with contempt looking on Him as a poor man because they thought that he lacked God's favor. In those days Jews equated riches with God's grace, and poverty with God's rejection. This concept is still taught by pastors who preach that riches are a sign of God's favor, however Jesus clearly rejected this way of thinking when he said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." **(Luke 6:20)**

The Greek word for poor is *ptochos* meaning *needy* and *helpless*. The word describes for us a person who, in their own humility, needs someone to lift them up. Actually, this word describes for us a person who is so poor that they can barely make ends meet, a person who has no possessions.

How many of Jesus' teachings about riches oppose those pastors whose pride in their

big expensive houses, rich church buildings, millions in the bank, and private airplanes; who interpret their success and wealth as a sign of God's favor. This idea appears to oppose that which Jesus said in **Luke 18:24-25**: *"And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'"*

It is hard to comprehend the needs and helplessness of the wealthy and their need for salvation because money acts as a source of power, authority, and success. This problem is the same for people with great talent and intelligence. Sometimes it is hard to simply trust in God. This is why I wish to briefly review at least three things that come into our life as a consequence of making riches our lord.

a. We fall into idolatry when we make riches our lord.

The Apostle Paul categorizes greed or covetousness as idolatry when in **Colossians 3:5** he says: *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."*

Behind every form of idolatry is hidden an evil spirit and every believer who serves

riches is taken captive by it. When we serve riches, we are led away by evil spirits who then take control of us because Christ and His kingdom no longer have first place in our hearts and minds; possessions, rather than God, rule over us. We become led away by wealth, prestige, selfish ambitions, and worldly pleasures and when we rise in the morning these things are first in our thoughts. How many Christians are found in the error of idolatry simply because their thoughts are filled with the things of this world? Because of idolatry, and the influence of evil spirits brought on by idolatry, many "rich and happy" people experience the wrath of God and thus suffer suicide, anxiety, obsessive thinking, divorce, drugs, violence, resentment, despair; living without peace and true life in Christ.

b. Idolatry will lead us into anxiety and unquenchable greed.

Jesus said: *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)*

★ **Behind every form of idolatry is hidden an evil spirit and every believer who serves riches is taken captive by it.**



Because we have become enslaved to riches, anxiety begins to churn inside and lead us to even greater greed. We are never satisfied because of the great empty chasm found in the absence of Christ's presence. I remember well the believers I counseled; many of whom, in an uncontrollable effort to fill the great emptiness inside, began buying things to satisfy their selfish desires rather than filling the emptiness with God's Word. And what happened to them? They became physically ill because of the anxiety that brought about physical ailments. The things they thought about and did not want to resign simply seized their entire life and destroyed their productivity and will to succeed; their behavior toward others grew negative and their ability to remain faithful to God was limited. Anxiety freezes our ability to go forward as long as we continue craving for that which can only give us temporary satisfaction. It's not wrong to wisely save up for the future; rather the problem is found

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in anxious greed that leaves our spiritual condition in disrepair. This will eventually lead us to certain destruction, traps of the enemy (namely debt), and absolute ruin.

The Apostle Paul confirms this for us when he says: *"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* **(1 Timothy 6:7-10)**

Henry Fielding once said, *"Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil."* Money can completely destroy a man's soul.

Some of us, when we were younger in Christ, had to rely on God to provide for our needs; we were happy and contented with less, we had a greater passion for Christ and were fully surrendered to Him. However, as we have grown more successful, earned a greater salary, and have had the ability to live at a higher standard we never seem have enough, we want things that we could never afford before, we are never satisfied with what we already have, and consequently we bring on ourselves many troubles. We go into debt

to go on vacation, to buy a car, to purchase the latest cell phone model or plasma TV; then to pay what we owe we must work overtime. The anxiety that fills our hearts is shown on our faces, we have no more time for the Lord, we have no time to fellowship with other believers and we go about void of the joy of the Holy Spirit because of the heavy burden we carry while growing more and more ineffective for the Lord.

c. We will no longer have quality time for the Lord.

The lord of riches will not allow us to have quality time for the Lord and His kingdom. Jesus Christ said: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Luke 12:34)

If our focus is on our career and money our thoughts will revolve around those things and will enslave us to the point that we will no longer have time for church and serving the Lord because all our time will be taken up with our career and chasing after pleasures.

This is why for many believers God is equated with money and riches. Many leave their ministries and callings and burden themselves with debt and possessions that smother God's plan because the things of this world will not allow them to bear godly fruit in their lives. In the end they are left ineffective for God's Kingdom and place

themselves under the judgment of eternal separation from God.

You see, when we become selfish, when we think only of ourselves and how to work everything to our own advantage, when we use the Kingdom for our own promotion without compassion for those around us it clearly shows that we no longer view life from God's eternal perspective. Everything else is more important than the Lord and His kingdom; we find time for all the unimportant things of life and are too busy building our life here on earth. In the end we become like Lot's wife who put her trust in earthly things rather than in the heavenly city not made by hands.

While speaking about the coming of God's Kingdom, Jesus said, *"Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they*

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bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:28-30)

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is drawing near. On that day we will have to give an account for our life on earth. On that day those who sought for riches will find themselves eternally separated from God. That's why Jesus said: *“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:24-25)*

▶ **2. GOD'S KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE PRIORITY.**

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matthew 6:33)

★ **Many leave their ministries and callings and burden themselves with debt and possessions that smother God's plan because the things of this world will not allow them to bear godly fruit in their lives.**

To seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness means to turn to him for help; to fill your thoughts His desires and goals and not with the things we selfishly desire; to take on God's character, to serve Him and those around us, and to become obedient to His eternal principles.

What are our priorities? What are those things that are important to us - people, things, fun, riches, or the Lord? Is He in the first place in our lives? Is He more important to us than new clothes, movies, television, a new car, our cell phone, or other things that tend to eat up the time we ought to spend for the Lord? Are our thoughts filled with things that are *“pure, good, honest, lovely, and of a good report”* or the latest shopping catalogue from the mall?

To seek His kingdom and righteousness means that Jesus is in control of every part of our life – our career, our plans, our relationships, and even our free time. His kingdom must be the center of our life! Our life on earth ought to be kingdom life!

The verb *to seek* means *to be continually absorbed in seeking for something; continually trying to reach something*. It doesn't mean that we try to come to church on Sundays rather it means that everyday, in every area of our life, we do His will.

▶ **3. IF WE WISH TO BE FREE FROM THESE GODS WE MUST TURN AWAY QUICKLY AND ACTIVELY AND SURRENDER TO GOD'S PROVISION.**

The Apostle Paul implored young Timothy and said: *"But you, O man of God, flee these things (from all those who think that wealth equals godliness) and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."* **(1 Timothy 6:11-12)**

Paul used active and powerful verbs to describe a stable Christian life under the true Lord: **fight the good fight and win!** If we want to be free from the lord of money we cannot remain passive and "wait on God" or "in His time" (as many passive "spiritual" Christians are apt to say), rather we must make a decision and immediately flee from the love of money, the wrong lord. We need to actively believe, obey God, and do that which is right. True faith seeks active works, not just passive listening! Christ said: *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* **(Matthew 6:24)**

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the

body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." **(Luke 12:22-26, 32)**

If we surrender ourselves to God's provision, the anxiety brought on by greed and lust will leave. Christ clearly tells us that we do not need to be anxious because anxiety cannot fill our needs. Actually, anxiety is a waste of time because the Creator of the universe loves us and knows our needs: *"because our father knows what we need before we ask Him."* He has promised to provide for our needs, however not necessarily all we want! We will find true blessing when we actively surrender ourselves to God's provision while seeking His kingdom and His righteousness and actively fleeing worldly wealth. Only then will we be in a position to do what we would not be able to do otherwise.

★ **The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is drawing near. On that day we will have to give an account for our life on earth.**



I remember reading about Hudson Taylor and His ministry *China Inland Missions*. When telling about his furlough he describes being in one church where he rebuked the Christians, especially the women who wore expensive, jeweled necklaces and earrings. He told them that he now knew the reason for his failure. While they were living in luxury, *China Inland Missions* was suffering because of lack of finances. Unfortunately this is true even today in churches and missions around the world, people give only what is left over.

If we believe God then we will not be building fountains in our churches or giving our leftovers to missions, rather will give of ourselves to expand God's Kingdom. I personally know many who have money but always give what is left over in order to ease their conscience which often condemns them for their affluent wealth. Rather than supporting missionaries and His work throughout the world they make sure they have accumulated what they want and

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give almost nothing to God's kingdom. While it looks like a lot for them it is still what is left over.

While churches, missionaries, and God's laborers suffer and hunger they live a life of pleasure, yet complain that they have nothing. Actually they complain the most because their lord is wealth! They give the best to themselves and what is left-over to the Lord. How is it that we love to buy new things for ourselves or save up for our own pleasures but when it comes time to give to the church or help out with a special project we have no money?

The spirit of the fallen believer led by wealth is similar to the Israelites who were so "spiritual" in the time of the prophet Haggai that they built for themselves houses and enjoyed a pleasurable life while God's house sat in ruin because supposedly "it was not the right time". *"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: "This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.'" Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?'" (Haggai 1:2-4)*

It is interesting that we cannot support the work of the Lord financially in place of buying pleasurable things for ourselves. If we build our own house while neglecting the house of God one thing is for sure, we will reap what we sow. Our worldly abundance will have absolutely

no value on that day when we stand before God. It will only testify against us that Jesus was not our Lord! James illustrated for us in his epistle: *"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."* **(James 5:1-6)**

The cries of God's reapers, His servants and laborers, the needs for expanding the kingdom of God, and the unheard cries for help reach the ears of God. God does not need our prayers as much as our active works! If we don't make a move in faith we will be responsible for our passivity, for the cries of the laborers on the Day of Judgment: *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"* **(James 2:14-16)**

Many will be judged on that that because their lord was money! When money is our god then our faith is meaningless, then our works are dead. We can intellectually agree with everyone but if we remain passive in faith then our faith has absolutely no eternal value!

The time has come for God to become our Lord! When God becomes the Lord our of our life and people no longer hold on to their money, material possessions and pleasures then true revival will come and they will give God all praise in order to expand His kingdom! In that day pastors and missionaries will not need to manipulate, rather people will be moved by the Holy Spirit to give because the Lord Jesus Christ rules over them (although it's absurd to say that the Lord will finally rule over Christians).

One day, I hope, it will be like the early church: *"Now the multitude of those who believed were*

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of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." (Acts 4:32, 34-35)

God will be Lord of the church in the last days, not wealth. If we are surrendered to the Lord, we will have fresh peace, strength, and joy; we will have more time to serve him; but only if we allow God to be our Lord.

Who is our Lord – God or riches? Who rules over us – God or the world? Are our spirits satisfied with what we have or are we filled with greed and lust? What are we frantically holding on to that is of no value to God? What are we enslaved to? In what is our identity rooted? Where is our focus – God or money? What has removed us

from ministering to others and serving Him? Is it self-glory, a plaque to hang on the wall?

Someone once said: "If you want to feel rich count the things you already have, those things that money cannot buy". We are not living just for self, rather we are living for the Lord. Our riches are in Him, not in earthly wealth! This is why I want to ask you today – where is your heart in these last days? Where is your focus? It is time to become free from this false lord and come before the One who can give you true life. Trust in God, "...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34) and He will grant you His peace which the world cannot comprehend!

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