

THE PITFALL OF MATERIALISM

Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:9-10

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus' teachings in **Matthew 6** vary from one issue to another until this **verse 24**. Summarily, He taught about the following:

- **Vv. 1-4:** He teaches and instructs on charitable deeds or giving which should not be done overly display for praises.
- **Vv. 5-15:** He taught the Model Prayer which remains valid for all times except that we thank God for the Kingdom (*the church*) which now exists.
- **Vv. 16-18:** He equally taught and instructed on fasting and its observance principles. The principles are guidelines for Christians.
- **Vv. 19-22, 24:** Christ teaches on materialism, upholding heavenly materialism but warned about earthly riches or possessions.

In these **verses 19-22**, Christ draws our attention to two basic objects:

- Two masters
- Love and hate
- Loyal and despise

- The two masters identified – God and Mammon.

THE LESSON: Meaning of Terms

- **God** – This is the Almighty, All Powerful and Sufficient Creator of all things.
- **Mammon** is a common Aramaic word for riches and from a Hebrew word signifying “**treasure**” (*Vine's Bible Dictionary*). In this verse **Mammon** is personified. However, according to Merriam Dictionary, Mammon is material wealth or possessions especially as having a debasing (esteeming) influence.
- The pitfall of materialism means letting or allowing money, wealth, possessions or status become the source of security, joy, identity or happiness instead of God in your life.

Christ is actually addressing obsession of riches or possessions. It is when a person has a persistent, uncontrolled and preoccupied feeling or urge to an unreasonable extent that God is not feared,

worshipped, that he becomes a servant or serves mammon.

According to Dr. Roger Henderson in his *"Money Sickness Syndrome"*: money becomes your master if:

- You avoid discussing finances because of anxiety it causes.
- Money is often the subject of family squabbles.
- You worry constantly about bills to pay.
- You spend compulsively.
- You feel pressure to accumulate large sums of money.
- You suffer physical and/or psychological symptoms resulting from money-related stress.

We must be guided by God's principles in all of this so that God's place in us is sacrosanct.

THE PITFALL OF MATERIALISM

The Trap or Snare not easily recognized danger of materialism things are pitfalls which include:

Misplaced Trust and Anxiety

First, wants never give happiness, safety or completeness. The yearning to acquire more possessions, the more the fear and dangers.

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which

drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." **1 Timothy 6:9-10.**

Therefore take no thoughts, saying: "What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." **Mathew 6:31-32.**

Here God defines the basic needs of man and beyond these needs are wants which the world sees as wealth, riches or possessions.

Riches may not be bad if godly or genuinely acquired. However, the attitude, behaviour and character in acquiring and driving or manning them so much so that God's principles are undermined is the bigger issue to balance. For instance, arrogance, greed, selfishness in one's riches or blessings.

Distorted Priorities

What preference we set mind, many a time pushes out love for people and God. People's time, energy and heart drift in choosing the way to go. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust*

doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The story of the foolish wealthy man in the Scripture is a pointer to us.

Hardness of Heart and Lack of Generosity

It is said that more acquisition of riches reduces compassion.

You rather see people as a means to get more money than the image of God who deserves to be loved.

"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." **Mark 10:25.**

This warning is about wealth making us self-sufficient instead of looking unto God.

Christians should feel secure first in Christ and not in wealth or riches.

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good,

that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share." **1 Timothy 6:17-18.**

God does not condemn riches but ungodly attitudes and characters shown in riches. For example stinginess, trust in your riches, uncaring for the poor and not sharing, etc.

PRECAUTIONS AND ANTIDOTES THE BIBLE GIVES

The take-home in this lesson lies in precautions:

Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." **1 Timothy 6:7.**

Thankfulness of what we have, where we are and who we are breaks the crave and cycle of *"I need more."*

Generous Giving

Giving goes beyond church collection.

Giving in the church is for the saints and the church in general; individual giving within and outside our levels extends to all men and attracts blessing **Matthew 6:1-4; Acts 20:35** According to a writer, *generosity is the fastest cure to greed and hospitality forces your hands open.*

Store Treasures in Heaven

We should invest time, money and skills in kingdom growth, in people and justice.

This is the wealth or possession that does not depreciate.

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Matthew 6:20

Set Guardrails

Is there anything that may be too hard to let go if God asks you?

Cf. Mark 10:21

Remember Your Identity

Always carry along with you the toga of who you are as a child of God, but more importantly, a Christian.

Being a Christian is bigger than being a child of God. You are not your physical "*net worth*". Your riches in Christ is your net worth.

CONCLUSION

Materialism can be so deceptive. It gives you assurances of false hope that you are completely secured by the much possessions you got.

However, the Bible assures us that we are already complete in Christ. ***Colossians 2:10***. Everything else on earth is bonus and cannot be taken along with us at death. Therefore, let us live in obedience to the Word of God.

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