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Jesus or Mammon

A Reflection on Matthew 6:24-34

Reflections [Parables and the Teaching of Jesus](#) 5 September 2015

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No one is naive enough to believe that we never sin against the Gospel; to sin against the Gospel is immediately to make ourselves enemies of Jesus Christ. Christians are conscious of this cardinal fact, and know well that it invites the severe judgement of God. We fear the consequences of this sin, yet we try to sugar-coat it with passing justifications, and persuade ourselves that all is well between Jesus and us. Asked if we love Jesus, we are quick to answer, with some indignation, "Yes, of course" — yet most Christians, in this, are being less than truthful with themselves.

Martin Luther was direct on this subject, when he wrote:

"It is impossible for one who loves gold and earthly possessions, and cleaves to them, not to hate God; for God here contrasts these two as enemies to one another, and concludes that if you love and cleave to one of these two, you must hate and despise the other. Therefore, however nicely and gently one lives here upon earth, and cleaves to riches, it cannot be otherwise than that he must hate God; and, on the other hand, whoever does not cleave to gold and worldly goods loves God. This is certainly true."

What does all this amount to? Christians, unlike those who are not, are instructed in the Gospel; Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear that it is not enough merely to hear the Word, to learn it, and to be able to quote it in conversation — for Satan himself can do all that, and better than any theological scholar could. The Gospel is not meant to be a body of knowledge merely possessed; it is a doctrine that must become a living power, put into practice, strengthening and comforting the believer, and making them courageous and bold. It must be internalised. Yet very few such Christians are to be found; there are many hearers of the

Gospel, but not so many doers of it.

Let us look at the profound truth set out in our text: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24). Our inability to live by the Gospel arises from our divided love, between Jesus and wealth.

First, to serve two masters is to serve neither. The Lord desires that our service be given out of love and cheerfulness; where it is not so given, it is no true service to Him, just as we ourselves are not pleased when someone does something for us only out of compulsion. This is a natural thing, and we experience it every day. Our service, therefore, cannot be divided; it must be rendered to Jesus alone, willingly and from the heart. That is why Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

But who are they who love Jesus, and do not cleave to gold and worldly possessions? If we look around us, we are unlikely to find one. It requires great effort to hear the Gospel, and to live according to it. Praise Jesus that we have the Gospel — but what do we do with it? A person becomes anxious the moment he loses a small sum of money somewhere in his house, yet we fail to show similar concern for the Gospel, and for a life lived according to the doctrine of Christ. At the same time, we claim to be holy, evangelical Christians, simply because we have tucked the Gospel away, deep in memory.

Our attitude ought to rest upon the firm belief that, the moment the Gospel is received, immeasurable riches come to us; for if we possess this treasure, we possess all that is in heaven and upon earth — but it is this treasure alone that we must serve. Either we must love God and hate money, or we must hate God and love money. If we believe in Christ, and have received Him as our Saviour, we must trust Him, and believe His assurance:

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you,

O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, 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. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." — Matthew 6:25-34 (KJV)

Amen.

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