

The Pursuit of Mammon

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“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

~ Luke 16:13¹ ~

Who isn't interested in money? Jesus frequently spoke of money. It is the vehicle for obtaining those things necessary for living and the accepted system in which we can buy and sell. Money is a standard for evaluating the value of goods, services, and our work effort. It is the fundamental concept in world economics. For the purposes of this blog, we'll define money as a necessary commodity with no positive or negative spiritual characteristics by itself.

God intended it for our provision. Everyone wants their needs met. It is His gift of provision not something we earn. He created the concept. He uses it to provide for meeting our needs, for our enjoyment and for giving to others.²

“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”

~ Philippians 4:19 ~

It is our spiritual attitude towards our pursuit of it that can be good or bad.

The drive to obtain money, the competition among men to win it and hold on to it has shown itself to be a main motive of those in culture. This is especially true in our consumer driven economy.

The desire for more money is a temptation to put our pursuit of it ahead of God. Our human desires are often at the root of our sins. I want something and the way to get it is to have more money. Unchecked, this thinking of course leads to the pursuit of more money regardless of the consequences. When that thinking takes over, money plays a different role in your life. It no longer is a commodity provided by God. It replaces God as the desire of one's heart. Luke calls money acquired with this desire 'mammon' (the Greek word is *mamonas*). Plainly put, mammon is the worship of money and what it can provide.

God never intended it to be this way. God wants us dependent on Him for provision, for security, for purpose, for hope and for gain. By this He glorifies Himself!

Mammon is the enemy's vehicle for our striving for independence. To pursue and capture mammon infers that one is no longer dependent on God for his provision. He has declared his autonomy from God by securing his own provision and protection of the future. This is a delusion of epic proportions.

This is why the Luke 16:13 passage above states that a man cannot serve God and mammon. **It is impossible!** A man pursues mammon at the expense of a relationship with God. The man may get what

¹ All scripture references in this blog are NASB95 unless otherwise noted

² See Philippians 2:3-4, 4:19; 1Timothy 6:17-19

he wants, but at an unfathomable cost. Further, consider this teaching from Jesus in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:19): "...but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Jesus also tells us in Luke 16:13 that "...either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other."

Summing things up so far:

- ⇒ If one's desire for money is greater than one's desire for God, the cost will be one's relationship with God!
- ⇒ Pursuing mammon gets in the way of love, relationships, the ministry, and physical and emotional health.
- ⇒ The pursuit of mammon has dire consequences!

So, how does the man of God respond? Here are three perspectives/applications to help:

1. It seems that the pursuit of mammon is, at its core, a desire for control so as to create peace and a life of contentment on my own terms, in my own way. But God declares that He is the source of peace and contentment for us. The vehicle to contentment is not through the pursuit of mammon but through Him.

Contentment is obtained by: "*Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,'" (Hebrews 13:5)

Paul writes that this is a learned behavior, "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." (Philippians 4:11)

Also, a man cannot be grateful and discontent simultaneously. Practice gratefulness. It pushes out discontentment, the desire for other things, and fills the void with contentment. Focus on what you have with gratefulness and not what you do not have.

2. Be sure you are pursuing God, not your desires.

"But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For 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. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness." (1Timothy 6:9-11)

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matt 6:33)

3. Enjoy what He has provided. Set your hope on God. Be generous in giving your money and your life to people.

"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves

the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

In closing, here are some rhetorical questions to meditate on:

1. How can a man tell if he is pursuing mammon or God?
2. Are all wealthy people seeking mammon?
3. How can you practice being grateful? For what, for whom?
4. How do you pursue “profit” or benefit without pursuing mammon?
5. Is mammon the same as greed?