

Lost to the Love of Money 12-13-15PM

One of the great concerns of Christians is how to keep ourselves and our families faithful to God. Doing so requires us to identify danger areas that could cause us to be lost. Three major downfalls for Christians (particularly younger Christians) are sexual immorality (of which there are nearly 40 warnings in the NT), alcohol (of which there are close to 30 NT admonitions), and the love of money (of which there are nearly 30 warnings in the NT). Immorality and intoxication are more easily identifiable, being a “lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). However, as being a “lust of the eye” or “pride of life”, the love of money requires a deeper discernment to catch.

In Matthew 6:19-24 Jesus warns in depth on the dangers of loving money. Jesus says in verses 22-23 that your eye is the lamp of your inner man; if your eye is consumed (by the love of money, indicating it is a “lust of the eye”), then your whole inner self is utter darkness. The “*Love of Money*” refers to the relationship of a Christian with money where money has become an **Intrinsic Value**. Intrinsic value is the term we use to describe something that is a core characteristic of ourselves. We might use an example of a shelf on which we place books. Let us think of books as parts of our lives; one book is our marriage, one book is our job, one is our family, one is our hobby. When something is an intrinsic value, it is not merely a book on the shelf, it is the shelf itself. Thus, if there is a change to that intrinsic value, all of the other “books” on the shelf are dramatically affected.

Is it possible that you have become a “lover of money”? Is money just a part of your life, or is it the thing upon which all other parts of your life sit? Our faith is supposed to be our “shelf”, our core intrinsic value. We cannot have more than one; thus Jesus’ words ring more true: “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*”

I Timothy 6:6-11 gives us a more characterizing warning as to the love of money, and tells us how to identify our character if we are lost to it. He says that it is a characteristic of those who want to get rich (so it is not the rich alone who have it); he says that it is a snare (trap) into which we can fall; he says that it is rooted in foolish and harmful desires; finally, he says that the result is to be pierced with many griefs. From this list we can put together some characteristics that would tell us if we are lost to the love of money:

1. Envy & Covetousness

Luke 16:14 *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him.*

Mark 15:10 *For he was aware that the chief priests had delivered Him up because of envy*

2. Unhappiness & Fear

Proverbs 27:20 *Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.*

Ecclesiastes 5:10 *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.*

3. The Dilemma of Debt

Proverbs 22:7 *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave.*

1 Corinthians 7:23 *You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.*

4. Distraction and Ruin

Matthew 6:23 *"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"*

Some might be tempted to think that being poor means they cannot have a love of money, or that the love of money is relegated to the rich. Yet this is not the case. In Job 31 Job (once a wealthy man) makes it clear that he NEVER trusted in wealth; it was never an intrinsic value. When he lost it all, it did not shake his faith, marriage or personality. Thus it was NOT the shelf of his life. Conversely, Asaph tells us in Psalm 73 that he, a poor man, struggled with an envy of the wealthy. When he put on a proper spiritual perspective, he ceased to define himself by what others had and he did not possess.

So now you need to ask yourself: are you a lover of money? It is not enough to say "not me". You need to know yourself by your actions. Remember, you cannot serve God and wealth.