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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"Love without law is power without direction, and law without love is machinery without a motor" (J.W. McGarvey, **Fourfold Gospel**. 604)

From J.D. Tant - Richard Overton - One of the oldest Christians in America is 109-year-old Richard Overton, who is also America's oldest World War II veteran. He served in the South Pacific during the war, and has been honored by the President at the World War II Memorial in Washington.

But the greatest honor he received was when he was baptized into Christ in the summer of 2014 when he was 107 years old.

Until recently, he drove his pickup to church every Sunday. Now others pick him up, and as late as last summer, he was mowing lawns for "widow women" in his neighborhood, as they were "too old" to do it themselves, he claimed.

Question about the Terms "Sinners" and "Saints"

Question

I do not wish to take up your time nor be controversial however,
I do wish your advice on the above topic. I have encountered the thought that Christians are saints (not sinners) who do sin and need forgiveness. while the non-Christian are sinners.
Christians being those who have been baptized for the remission of sins.

I have concluded that a person baptized for the remission of sins and living a godly life (trying their best to follow the Lord) is better called a saint in need of forgiveness than a sinner. I might not have made this too clear but, maybe you will understand.

Thank you for your response

Answer

Thanks for your good question. We should take care to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11)

In one sense all of us are sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), in that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10). Usually the term "sinner" is used in Scripture to denote one who is presently guilty of and living in sin (Romans 3:7; 5:8; Galatians 2:15, 17; 1 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 7:26; 12:3; James 4:8; 5:20; 1 Peter 4:18; Jude verse 15).

Those properly denominated "saints" can be presently guilty of sin. Those who composed the "church of God ... at Corinth" were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). But these "saints" were so "carnal" (1 Corinthians 3:1) they accepted and gloried over a man who had his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). They were not acceptable to God in that condition. Rather, Paul demanded they repent (1 Corinthians 5:13). The term "saint" indicates we have been set apart from the sinful world and to God (Ephesians 2:19) and put under the obligation to live holy lives (Ephesians 5:3-7).

It is best we be clear in how we are using the terms "sinner" and "saint."

"All Gave Some, Some Gave All"

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

For over 60 years, our neighboring town of Alpharetta has had an "Old Soldiers' Day" parade to honor those who have served our country in times of peace and war and thus preserved our freedom. The title, "All gave some, some gave all," refers to the fact that all of our service men and women have given their time and effort to serve, and some have given all, in that their very lives were given and sacrificed on the altar of freedom. It is certainly fitting that we pay our tribute to those who serve, both young and old.

But is there not an application for us as Christians? We recall Paul's admonition to Timothy:
"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Are not all Christians soldiers - soldiers of the cross? We sing the song "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" How would you answer that for yourself? While those in the U.S. Armed Services can retire after years of service, I was not aware there was a temporal retirement for those in the Lord's Army. Oh, we are promised a great "retirement" one day, but not in this life.

What do we expect of our soldiers - the Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard? We expect diligence, alertness, readiness. As Christians we have a Commander in Chief, not the president of the United States, but the commander of a great host. When young David approached Goliath, he said, "I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45).

What would happen to a soldier who went into battle, sought for a nice shady tree, and then sat down to watch the battle unfold? One of two things would happen. (1) He would quite likely end up dead, or (2) he would be court-martialed for "dereliction of duty."

Why is it that so many Christians are content to sit on the sidelines? Oh, they faithfully attend church services, and are careful to avoid sinful conduct, but what are they doing in the way of being engaged in the battle for the truth? Consider another of Paul's admonitions to Timothy: "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). The word "warfare" (**ASV**) is from the Greek "strateia," which Strong's Greek Dictionary defines as "military service, i.e. (figuratively) the apostolic career (as one of hardship and danger):- warfare."

While most of us who read these lines may not be facing hardship and danger, that does not mean that we cannot be actively engaged in using the "weapons of our warfare."

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, **having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;** in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows off the evil one. And take **the helmet of salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:13-18).

This is more than filling the pews on Sunday, more than paying our taxes, more than obeying the traffic lights, and more than being nice to our neighbors. What do your soldiers do when one of their comrades is captured in battle? They set out to rescue him! What do we do about friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, store clerks, etc. that have been captured by our greatest enemy, Satan? Do we complacently go about our daily lives and make no effort to save them from eternal hell?

James encourages us to "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22). "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Yes, there are those in the world today who have given all. Many of the young girls who were captured by the Boko Haran in Nigeria some months ago were Christians. And there are Christians in other Islamic strongholds who are suffering slavery, torture and death. While we may not be able to rescue them from temporal death, we can work to save souls from eternal death. God expects no less. He expects us to give, and give more than lip service.

Mark Well Her Bulwarks - No. 8

Tommy Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

This bulwark I call "The mission of the church," or "why does the church exist?" To some who have been reading these articles, these things may not seem important, but for myself, as one who has been preaching over 60 years, I am very concerned, having observed, and still observing, the path many congregations have taken or are taking away from God. To me, preserving the Lord's church (His saved people on earth, Acts 2:47) is very important. Why? Because the church exists to glorify God. Paul wrote, "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21). So anything the church does, either as a collective or through its individual members, must always glorify God, not men.

Let me clarify something lest some misunderstand. In my teaching/preaching I seek to convert men to Christ, not to a group of people meeting as a congregation. But, when one is converted to Christ and

saved, he/she is then added to God's spiritual house, the church (Acts 2:47; 1 Peter 2:5). That saved person then is under obligation to seek out and join himself/herself to a group of people, a local body of Christians who meet together as they did in New Testament days. How else is one able to publicly assemble with brethren to eat the Lord's Supper weekly (not weakly), to sing, to pray, to give. But, when they join themselves to a local church, they should make sure the church is functioning as best it can after the New Testament order of things. I write, the best it can, because I know the church is made up of imperfect people prone to error. That is why the epistles of the New Testament were written, to deal with sin and error creeping into a congregation. Take time to read Revelation chapters 2-3 and notice the seven churches described there. Can't you now see why it is so important to keep the bulwarks of God intact? To make sure the local church is kept aware of the possibility it can depart from the faith once for all delivered (Jude verse 3). A little leaven can destroy the whole, if not removed (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). Brethren must be warned of impending dangers, so they can avoid them, making sure the bulwarks of God are kept in good repair. Then the world will not infiltrate and destroy the group. Now let's notice God's bulwark of "the mission of the church." The church universal is simply a relationship, a unit of fellowship for all who are the saved children of God (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:1-3). It has no work function on earth to perform. The work God has assigned the church is done through the members of a local congregation (Ephesians 2:10).

Note the work God has assigned His Son's church to do. It is spiritual 1. To worship God (John 4:22-24; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). 2. To preach the gospel that can change people from lost to saved (Acts 3:19; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This makes a better society. 3. To edify itself (Ephesians 4:11-16). 4. To care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25; Hebrews 10:23-25).

In an earlier lesson it was noted that the Lord's church is "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). So everything the church does should function as a spiritual unit, designed to provide for man's

spiritual welfare, and not man's material desires (Romans 14:17). The church as a collective was never designed to function and provide for man's social activities. That is the function of the home and society. The work God has assigned the church is spiritual, the saving of souls, not satisfying the cravings of the physical body.

Today, many have lost sight of the church's true mission. It is difficult in many places to distinguish the local church, wearing the name "church of Christ," from some community center, social hall, or country club. Surely the church Jesus shed His blood for had a higher purpose than "fun, food, and frolic." People have replaced the gospel of Christ that saves, with a social gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). The proponents of this social gospel know that most people want to be religious, but not too religious. They want a religion that soothes the conscience without disturbing it to change. So, they build church kitchens, fellowship halls, family life centers, gymnasiums to attract people to their assembly halls while de-emphasizing the true mission of seeking to save souls.

When asked to defend these things as the work (mission) of the church they cannot give a scriptural answer. Let me illustrate. Do family life centers and gymnasiums fit the purpose of evangelism? If so, how? Jesus taught that giving food is not the way to evangelize (John 6:25-35). People attracted to a meeting for food and drink will soon grow dissatisfied, and want more. Jesus continued in verses 48-58 that true conviction comes from assimilating His life into their lives, not filling their stomachs.

What about edification? People that are drawn to a place for food and entertainment are not going there to be edified by the word of God (Romans 14:17-19; Acts 20:32). Peter tells the new Christians to desire the sincere milk of the word, not physical food, in order to grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2). It is the word of God taught that edifies, not bodily exercise and worldly entertainment (1 Timothy 4:6-8). (to be continued)

"He Was Lying"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

We find this expression, "He was lying to him," in 1 Kings 13:18. It was an old prophet who lied to the man of God having been sent by Jehovah to cry out against the idolatry of Jeroboam. The man of God had been instructed by the Lord, once his message was delivered to the king, not to "eat bread or drink water nor return by the same way" he came (1 Kings 13:9). Yet the old prophet said he had received a message from an angel, being a prophet himself, that God had changed His mind. Now he was permitted to go home with him and he could eat bread and drink water (1 Kings 13:18). Because he believed this lie, violated the commands of God, he lost his life (1 Kings 13:20-21). What possible motive did the old prophet have for lying to the man of God, which led to his death? I certainly wish I knew; however, the answer is not given to us. Yet there are some very valuable lessons here for us.

Not all religious people tell the truth. I am so afraid that many in the world today believe and practice numerous things simply because some preacher or religious teacher has told them to do so. It is not because it has been revealed in the word of God. Many times the very opposite of what is believed is found in the Scriptures. For instance, same sex marriage. A great number of religious leaders have spoken out in favor of this ungodly practice. Regardless of what men may teach, how many are for such and even if the laws of the land permit it God says it is an abominable sin in His eyes (Matthew 19:4-5; Romans 1:26-27). Notice the instruction given to us by the apostle John, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). How can we test what is taught? Compare what is said to the Bible. Better listen to the Lord!

There are consequences for believing a lie. The man of God lost his life. You and I could lose our souls! In 2 John 9, the beloved apostle said, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." The word "transgresses" is defined as "to go past or to pass over without touching a thing; tropically, to overstep, neglect, violate, transgress; he that transgresseth, oversteppeth, i.e. who does not hold to the true doctrine" (Thayer. 478). What are the consequences for transgressing the doctrine of Christ? I don't have God! Can I be saved without Him? Certainly not! One of the most fearful passages I know of in the entire Bible is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Paul sounded the warning about believing a lie and being condemned as the result. The reason they would perish? There was not the love of the truth. Those who love the truth want to know what it says, will study and meditate on it, and then practice what they find revealed to them. Be careful what you believe!

God's word does not change. The text does not tell the method God used to speak to the man of God. It simply says he "went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord" (1 Kings 13:1). We have already noticed that he was instructed by the Lord not to eat no bread, drink water, or return the same way (1 Kings 13:8-9, 16-17). Was it the old prophet who had given the man of God these first instructions? I don't think so! Did Jehovah change methods of giving instruction to His servant? No! Did His word change? No! What a great lesson for us. We have the completed revelation of God's will, which James called, "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). Has it changed since God gave it to man? No! Does it meet the needs for all mankind today? Absolutely! It tells us what sin is and its consequences. It instructs us on how those sins can be forgiven through the blood of Christ. Once forgiven, we are told how to live for the Lord and go to heaven when we die. We do not need the words of some man, but to believe and obey the commands of our great God.

The Lord holds each of us personally responsible for our action. The man of God did not try to shift the blame to the old prophet for his failure. This is often the case when dealing with one's sin. Some will shout "Look what _____ made me do." Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul made numerous excuses for his sin of not completely destroying the Amalekites. Yet in the end, God did not accept any of those explanations given but rejected him from being king. When I appear before the Judge of all men, He will hold me responsible for what I have done, not what I feel someone else made me do (Romans 2:6).

Much about this story I do not understand. But may the God of heaven and all the earth help each of us to value the things garnered from it so we can better serve Him.

Is That Really What It Means?

An Eye For An Eye

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

The scenario plays out every day, potentially millions of times every day. Someone does something nasty to another - what it is doesn't matter, the same reaction will result whether it is serious or frivolous. The one who is wronged may articulate it clear and concise or may simply reserve the thought in his heart. When verbalized, it often comes out like this: "He'll get his," or "He's gonna get what's coming to him," or "Vengeance is sweet," or a variety of other sayings, some which are unfit to repeat. It matters not what we call it: getting even, or payback, or retribution, or tit for tat; the end result is always the same - someone did something nasty to me, so I'm going to do something nasty to them. Many are familiar with a Bible phrase that would seem to justify such behaviour. It is called by some "the law of retaliation." The Bible says,

...you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Exodus 21:23-25)

My guess is most people are not familiar with all 3 verses, but likely just the first portion of verse 24, "eye for eye." Some will cite this text to justify doing unto others what has been done unto them; which is a perversion of what is commonly called the golden rule. Jesus said,

...whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
(Matthew 7:12)

We are not to treat people how they have mistreated us, but we are to treat them how we would like to be treated. Not only that, but earlier in this same context, Jesus addressed the "eye for eye" idea. He said,

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

Friend, if you and I are going to be followers of Jesus, then we cannot look for the opportunity to get back at someone, to take vengeance for ourselves. Such has no part in the Christian life. Just a few verses later, Jesus would tell us to love our enemies and do good to those who mistreat us (Matthew 5:44). The apostle Paul repeats these thoughts, and reminds us that vengeance belongs to God, not us (Romans 12:14-21).

A Christian may not justify revenge using the "eye for eye" Scripture. It is contrary to the doctrine of Christ as given in the New Testament. As we noted already, the "eye for eye" law is found in Exodus 21. It also appears in Deuteronomy 19 and Leviticus 24. And the same law exists in many other ancient cultures, and can also be found in Islamic law today (in fact, there was a "retribution in kind" case in Iran just recently¹).

Unfortunately, this law, as given in the law of Moses and in the other cultures is usually misrepresented. It is not a law of vengeance. The one who is wronged is not handed a "get even" card to be redeemed at a convenient time. The "eye for eye" law is exactly that—a law. It is part of a judicial system. Adam Clarke observes:

Nothing, however, of this kind was left to private revenge; the magistrate awarded the punishment when the fact was proved, otherwise the lex talionis would have utterly destroyed the peace of society, and have sown the seeds of hatred, revenge, and all uncharitableness.
(ACC)

When Jesus mentioned this law in Matthew 5, some suppose that He was contrasting His will with Moses' Law. This is not the case. Earlier in the chapter He spoke against any who would teach men to do other than what the Law says (Matthew 5:17-19). Did He say such a thing, and then proceed to teach people to do something that was different from Moses' law? To do so would be hypocrisy. Jesus was addressing a misuse of the "eye for eye" law. John Wesley observed:

The tradition of the elders seems to have put this corrupt gloss upon it. But magistrates had an eye to this rule in punishing offenders, and doing right to those that are injured. (JWN)

God has never permitted, let alone commanded people to take personal vengeance. The "eye for eye" law is part of a judicial system, not an opportunity for payback. In fact, if folks would thoroughly read the context of the law (Exodus 21; Leviticus 24 & Deuteronomy 19), it would become clear that the purpose of this law is equitable justice, not personal retaliation.

1 [Washington Post](#)

In Jesus Name, Amen

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

"In Jesus name" is as much a part of our prayers as "our Father in heaven." Our supplications would feel incomplete if we did not include that statement, and rightfully so, since we are told to pray "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). But what is implied in that proclamation?

We should know that "In Jesus name" is not a blanket statement or magic phrase we must say to get what we want. Instead, it is a humble plea on our part for God to receive our thanks through Jesus (our Mediator, 1 Timothy 2:5) and to consider our requests as we seek His will. "In Jesus name" is our confession of submission to His will - that we do not want things contrary to it. We may see a certain outcome in prayer, but because of our commitment to Christ's will being done, and our confidence that God will provide what is best (Matthew 6:8), we should pray in Jesus name to declare our willingness to accept whatever God wants (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). This dedication will also lead us to examine ourselves to make sure we are living according to His will (2 Corinthians 13:5). We pray in "Jesus' name" because we seek only what is consistent with God's word (1 John 5:14-16). If our behavior or request contradicts that plea, we are incapable of praying in Jesus name (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Peter 3:7, 12), even if we say that phrase in our prayers. "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). Thus, to pray in Jesus name is to pray according to His name (Colossians 3:17).

When Jesus told His disciples to pray in His name (John 15:16), He was originally speaking to His apostles, who would eventually receive power from the Spirit to reveal Christ's will (14:16-17, 26). They would need strength to "bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning (14:27). Thus, Jesus promised them: "whatever you ask in My name, that I will do ... If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (14:13-14). We realize the Spirit no longer works as He did with the apostles and that His task of revealing God's word is complete (2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3), but is Jesus' promise dead as well? Will He no longer answer the prayers of His disciples who seek His blessing by evoking His name? I don't believe so, because there are passages that teach Christians to pray to God for help (Philippians 4:6; James 1:5; 5:14-16; 1 John 5:15). His promise is just as real for us in performing His will as it was for the apostles in revealing that will. The work is different, yes, but the needs are the same - and so is the promise. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). God promises to hear us as we pray according to Jesus' will, and as we seek His provision "in Jesus name, Amen."

Does God have a Plan for me?

Tanner Campbell | Rapid City, South Dakota, USA

There are a number of ways to answer this question. First

First, he absolutely does have a plan for you and everyone else on this earth. A plan for us that is so important that it is the cause for every page of the Bible. God designed a plan for man to live with Him eternally. God first wants man to hear about His plan. This is accomplished through the revelation of His plan documented in the pages of the Bible (Romans 16:25). Then, it is through the spreading of His revelation by His disciples that this is fully accomplished (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 10:14-15).

Without this step of the plan, man is not able to live by faith in Jesus (Romans 10:17). The revelation of God's plan is purposed to convince men of their sinful state and the condemnation to come, and explain the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that can provide them with forgiveness of sins. If one's heart is sincere, then the words of the gospel will provoke him to believe in Jesus as the Son of God who came to this earth 2,000 years ago to take away his sins. This belief and a confession of this belief are the next two steps found in the plan of God for you (Romans 10:9-10). Following this, the natural conclusion would first be to stop our ways of sin, repenting of our sins (Acts 3:19). Once this initial foundation of faith, truth, and commitment is laid, then it is time for the work of God to forgive sins. This is accomplished through immersion in water (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:11-13; 1 Peter 3:21). Coming up from the water, we are new people, clean, pure, and holy; having put to death the man of sin in order to be resurrected out of the water as the man of godliness (Romans 6). This is the plan of God, as revealed in the scriptures.

Secondly, God does have a plan for you for your everyday life. Ephesians 2:10 says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God purposed in His plan beforehand that the man of godliness (which resulted from hearing, believing, confessing, repenting and being immersed) would be created in Christ Jesus. Yes, it was God's plan from the beginning that salvation would be possible only through His son. The Christian is "His workmanship," that was created again (born again) a new man, free of sin. The purpose of this new creation according to the text is "for good works." God's plan for our everyday life is that we'd be committed to good works. Not works that we think are good works, but the text is clear that it is God who defines the good works that we are to do. Notice again that the good works that we were made to accomplish were "prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God has taught us in His word what good works He expects out of us every day (some examples of these can be found here: Colossians 3:18-25). God does have a plan for every day of our lives.

Thirdly, although we just answered whether God has a spiritual plan for you, I know that this question is usually asked in reference to whether God has a plan for your physical life on this earth (such as marriage, children, careers, illness, where to live, prosperity, etc.). There are so many aspects to consider in order to properly answer this. One piece of the answer is the freedom of choice within every person. This complicates things; for example, would God have us to choose sin? Certainly not, but against the counsel of God individuals choose to sin. Sometimes these sins have drastic consequences that change the course of both the life of the person who committed the sin and the people involved.

There is another uneasy side to the answer that chapter nine of Ecclesiastes does a good job of addressing. In verse two it is said: "All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath." And later, in verse eleven it is said: "I returned and saw under the sun that - The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all." In these verses the bible brings up hard truths that many have found difficult to accept today. Nevertheless, the truth is that "one thing happens to all" (v.3), whether it be the

good, pure and true worshiper of God, or the wicked who brings no honor to God. Even the fastest runner loses a race and the strongest army is conquered. The idea that “time and chance happen to them all” is a painful truth sometimes when we fall on the wrong side of time and chance. Bad timing is a real thing and bad luck is a real thing; these have an effect on the question of whether God has a plan for our earthly circumstances.

Another thing that changes the course of our lives is the effect of prayer. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16). Through the requests of the righteous, God provides for their wants and needs. Many examples can be seen in the scriptures of changing circumstances due to prayer. One simple example is Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:10, who asked for blessings and a larger portion of territory. The Lord granted what he asked. For the righteous, prayer will always be an important aspect of their condition of life, both spiritually and materially.

Many other things can be added to the equation as well, such as making wise and godly choices; such will have a dramatic impact on the quality of one's life on earth: 1 Peter 3:10-11 “he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”

Ultimately, God can work in our lives, causing good things to come our way, and allowing trials to fall upon us in order to help us to grow stronger. Mary's words are fitting here, not just for her life but for all the righteous: Luke 1:49 “He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.” God is our Creator and He remains in control over His creation. We cannot limit His abilities or willingness to help us, do good to us, and answer the prayers of His children. Limitations, of course, can only be placed on God in the areas in which He Himself has limited Himself in accordance with His righteous justice.

So then, we have considered both the spiritual and material side of the question “does God have a plan for me?” However, I am compelled to make one last point. Did you notice in this article how direct I was able to be about God's spiritual plan for us to follow in our lives? Did you also observe the somewhat vagueness in an attempt to answer whether God has a plan for our physical life? This is because we are limited to what has been revealed to us in God's Word. It becomes clear then what is most important to God and should be most important to us. The focus of the Bible is not about improving the state of our earthly life, it is about doing that which is necessary for our eternal salvation; to live for Christ in the purity of holiness in anticipation for an eternity with Him. That is the plan that needs to be our priority. Whether God has a specific plan for our individual physical lives is unimportant in light of eternity; nevertheless, as it was discuss in this article, one thing we can be certain of is that God most certainly does work in our lives and on this earth. So maybe this life will be a little easier for us, or maybe not, but that's no matter, let us follow the plan of God that will lead us to an everlasting home. Yes, God does have a plan for us.

Have You Left Your First Love?

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Any student of the Bible will quickly become familiar with the church at Ephesus. We read of how Apollos taught there (Acts 18:24), as well as Aquila and Priscilla being familiar with Apollos and his work (Acts 18:26). Also, the Apostle Paul corrected the false concepts that many struggled with on the subject of baptism and further helped them establish the church in the midst of extreme difficulties (Acts 19). Later on, Paul would have a very touching, yet stern meeting with the elders in the church at Ephesus, warning them of false teachers (Acts 20). Obviously, the epistle to the church at Ephesus is well studied and appreciated.

The Lord Jesus had some things to say to this church in Revelation 2:1-7. The Lord recognized that they had tried those who were claiming to be apostles, but were not genuinely sent from Christ. They would not endure liars (Revelation 2:2). The church had labored for the cause of Christ (Revelation 2:3). However,

there was one area in which the church had fallen short – their love and devotion to Christ (Revelation 2:4).

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love,” (Revelation 2:4).

The term “first” implies an area of priority. The first love for every congregation of God’s people is to be love for God and His Son, Jesus. Jesus taught this principle throughout His earthly ministry, most notably in Matthew 22:37-38: “...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This the first and great commandment.” Love for the Lord is to completely consume a person, striking one’s heart, soul, mind and strength. At the heart of everything that we do for the cause of Christ and the church should be love. Some may serve God for the wrong reasons and motives. Paul spoke of those who preach Christ out of envy and to cause harm (Philippians 1:15-17). Perhaps the church in Ephesus had been defending the cause of the gospel of Christ, facing opposition, yet had not been doing so out of genuine love and sincerity (Revelation 2:2-4)? The words of Paul should resonate with us, “But speaking the truth in love...” (Ephesians 4:15).

Loving the Lord will absolutely lead to obedience (John 14:15). However, do not miss the point: love must be the motivating factor. A person might be obedient, but have no love for God. That is a life of emptiness, is it not? Just imagine trying to serve God and obey Him, but have no sincere reason for doing so. That is a life of vanity and nothingness.

The church at Ephesus learned at the Lord’s rebuke that when there is no love, no zeal and no devotion to God then there really is no real godliness. We could appear to be doing all of the right things, saying the right prayers and even teaching the truth, but if it is not done out of love, then what good does it profit?

Our Lord of glories tells the church in Ephesus to “Remember...repent, and do the first works...” (Revelation 2:5). Just as Paul first instructed the church in Ephesus that the old man of sin must be put away, renew your mind and your actions (Ephesians 4:22-32), that is exactly what the church must do again. Remember where you began, when you were committed to the Lord in love and truth and renew your minds once more.

Yet, the Lord offers a reward to the church in Ephesus if they will remember and repent. They will have access to the tree of life in the paradise of God (Ephesians 2:7). Calling us to think back to the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden, that first tree with its fruit that provided life (Genesis 3:22), we can have life and fellowship restored with our heavenly Father, our first love.

The book of Revelation closes with a similar promise: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). There is no greater testimony of your love and faithfulness to God and to the bride of Christ than your obedience, diligence, devotion, zeal and commitment to your first love. That is why you will keep the commandments. Just as the Lord said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Let us be diligent to always be looking inwardly at our motives for serving Christ. If our heart, mind and soul begins to depart from sincerity and love then it will only lead us down a path of vanity, away from God. Fellowship in the paradise of God can be ours if we obey out of sincerity and love.

from the e-book, "And They Shall Become One Flesh"

Spending Eternity Together

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

...And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

'Til Death Do Us Part

No one should enter a marriage relationship "hoping that it will work out." The firm resolve of both man and woman must be that this relationship will continue and prosper "...til death do us part." The Lord has made it abundantly clear that His intention for the marriage relationship is one man and one woman for life.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:6)

The union of man and woman together in marriage is not simply a matter of sharing a residence together; God has joined the two - they have entered a covenant relationship which is divinely instituted and authorized. In fact, the Lord made it clear in the same context, contrary to what was the practice among the Jews, and what is commonly practiced today, that the marriage relationship can only be dissolved, lawfully, for one reason - sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9).

Even though God has provided this exemption, the Lord revealed that reconciliation is preferable. Hosea, who had been commanded to take "...a wife of harlotry..." (Hosea 1:2), after she proved unfaithful to him, he was told:

"...Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans." (Hosea 3:1)

Why take her back? It demonstrated God's own relationship with His people, who had been unfaithful to Him; but He was willing to receive them back. If God is willing to receive unto Himself those who had been unfaithful, is it not fitting that folks today imitate His examples?

The apostle Paul revealed that death is the end of a marriage relationship. At that point, the surviving spouse is released from his or her partner, and free to marry another (Romans 7:1-3).

I cannot imagine the pain of losing a spouse. And yet that very thing happens regularly. However, the Scripture gives the Christian comfort:

"...the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

Together Forever

If both husband and wife are Christians, then it is certainly true that they will be together throughout eternity - but not as husband and wife. The spousal relationship ceases at death; they are no longer husband and wife in eternity. The Sadducees once attempted to confound Jesus with a fictitious scenario about marriage and the resurrection. The speculated:

Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife. (Mark 12:20-23)

Answering their inquiry, Jesus said,

...when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God. (Mark 12:25)

Though marriage is a divine institution, it is earthly. The marriage relationship is for the here and now, while we are in the flesh. Paul makes it very clear that there is a huge difference between the nature of our bodies here upon the earth and what we shall be when we enter into eternity (1 Corinthians 15:39-44, 46-50).

The marriage relationship is a blessing of this life. God has made provisions for man and woman to not dwell alone through their course upon the earth. In the institutions of marriage He has provided the closest companionship possible in the human experience. The joys of marriage cease where eternity begins; but there is no reason for sadness in this. For it is then, that the joys of eternity begin, where the faithful shall dwell together with the God of creation.. If we are both Christians, husband and wife, then we have hope to be eternally together - not as husband and wife, but as brother and sister in the kingdom of heaven.

Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

In Matthew 12:31-32, Jesus said, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Both Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 teach the same thing.

What Is The Sin Of The Blasphemy Against The Holy Ghost?

By examining these three passages we see that what Jesus condemned here as "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" was attributing the miraculous work of the Holy Ghost to the power of Satan.

Can This Sin Be Committed Today?

If a person attributes the miraculous work of the Holy Ghost to the power of Satan today, then he commits the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost today. But some say, "but nobody is performing miracles today; so how could we attribute the power of a Holy Ghost enabled miracle to Satan?" In reply, let me remind the readers that when we discuss with the Pentecostals, and we point out that the miracles were to confirm the word, they say that we need the miracles today to confirm the word to us today. We generally reply, we have the miracles found in the Bible for confirmation. Using similar reasoning, the truth is that someone could blaspheme against the Holy Ghost today by believing that the miracles of the New Testament actually occurred, but believe and say that they were performed by the power of Satan.

The Obvious Meaning Of The Passages

Frequently in Albert Barnes' commentary, he gives various explanations for a passage, and then tells which one he believes is the correct one. Many times, one of the reasons given for why he takes his position is stated by the following quote from him: "Because it seems to be the most obvious. It is that which will strike plain men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense." Now I ask the reader What is the "most obvious" meaning of Matt 12:31-32? What is the meaning "which will strike **plain** men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense"? Be honest! The obvious meaning is that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the one sin that cannot be forgiven, **even if repented of**.

But What About 1 John 1:9, etc.?

In opposition to this obvious meaning of the passage, many Christians will ask about passages like 1 John 1:9 that teach that any and all sin can be forgiven. Their point is that since the Bible teaches that any sin repented of will be forgiven, that means that the position taken by this article is incorrect.

There is really no conflict however. What we have here is the rule, and the exception to the rule. We understand the rule, and the exception to the rule in the divorce and remarriage passages. Luke 16:18

states the general rule that remarriage after divorce is adultery. But Matthew 19:9 states the one exception ("except") to that rule: if the divorce was "for fornication," then the subsequent remarriage is not adultery.

Likewise 1 John 1:9 states the general rule that any and all sin will be forgiven, if we are willing to confess that sin. However, Matthew 12:31 states the one exception ("but" is used in the sense of "except") to that rule: if the sin is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it will not be forgiven, even if we confess that sin. As a matter of fact, the first part of Matthew 12:31 ("All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men") states the general rule of forgiveness just like 1 John 1:9 does; and then Matthew 12:31 goes on to state that there is one exception to that rule. Conclusion: all sin will be forgiven (if one repents and confesses), but there is **one exception** to that rule, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost!

Does Blasphemy Of Holy Ghost Equate To No Repentance?

Some say that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is any sin that a person won't repent of, or is when a person reaches a point where they cannot repent. Notice the following two quotes from an article written by a Christian, commenting on the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: "His sin is unpardonable simply because he is unwilling to travel the road that leads to pardon. The only sin that God is unable to forgive is the unwillingness to accept forgiveness ... Grieving ..., resisting ..., and quenching ... the Holy Spirit may lead one to become so calloused that he will not even hear the truth."

These two positions end up at the same place, that anybody willing to repent may receive forgiveness for any sin. This position is pleasing from an emotional viewpoint, because we are never put into a position of having to say that somebody desiring forgiveness cannot receive it. Someone has put the position this way: anybody desiring forgiveness and showing remorse, must not have committed the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, therefore they can be forgiven. But though this position may be appealing from an emotional viewpoint, it ignores the plain truth taught by Jesus, that there is one sin that will not be forgiven, no matter how sorry a person might be that they have committed the sin. Following is a summary of scriptural problems with this position:

- There is **nothing even remotely resembling this in the passages**. Nothing in either of the three passages (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, or Luke 12:10) say or imply that the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost is a sin that will not, or cannot be repented of.
- This passage names **one** sin as unpardonable, but these positions would mean that **any sin** could be called the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost (since any sin can remain unrepented of, or since a person could eventually be hardened concerning any sin) including blasphemy against Jesus, which the passage says is **not** the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.
- Is there a passage that teaches you can reach a point where it is absolutely impossible to change your mind, or does the Bible just teach that you can reach a point where it is difficult to repent? Assuming that you can reach a point where it is impossible to repent, there is absolutely no reference made to it by the three passages in question.
- The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not the lack of repentance at all, but involves **speaking** against the Holy Ghost. The sin does not involve leaving something off, such as repentance; instead it involves doing something actively, specifically, speaking evil against the Holy Ghost.

The difference between the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and every other sin is not in the repentance, but in the forgiveness. Notice that repentance is assumed in the first part of Luke 12:10, "whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him" (else a person can be forgiven for sin unrepented of), therefore repentance should be assumed in the later part of the verse, or else there is really no difference between blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and blasphemy against Jesus, both would be forgiven upon repentance. Let's rewrite the pertinent part of Matthew 12:31 adding this assumption of repentance: "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (if repented of), but (except) the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." Seeing it that way should help us to understand that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can be repented of just like any other sin (there is no reason to think otherwise anyway); the difference is that God will not forgive it, even if it is repented of.

1 John 5:16

1 John 5:16 reads, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." The teaching here fits Matthew 12:31 "hand in glove." If a man commits any other sin, pray for him, he shall be forgiven (again, assuming he repents). But if a man commits the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, no need to pray for him (you would be wasting your time), he cannot be forgiven (even if he does repent).

Why Is This Issue Important?

Understanding this issue correctly is important for the following reasons:

- Because it is important to teach exactly what God's book says on this and every other matter.
- Because we need to warn people that if they commit this sin, unlike any other sin, they **cannot** be forgiven, even if they repent.
- Because we must not compromise God's teaching in order to make it more palatable. We must not water it down just because we feel unwilling to face the possibility of God refusing to accept someone who truly desires his acceptance.
- Because we must be willing to accept clear Bible teachings over standard brotherhood positions. Where is our loyalty, to our brethren's standard positions, or to God's book and what it actually teaches?

Conclusion

Is there any real reason not to accept the **obvious** meaning of the Matthew 12:31-32, that there is one sin that God has decided not to forgive no matter what? I'm sorry, but the Bible teaches that once a person commits the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, there is no hope for him left. It doesn't matter if that person is baptized, it doesn't matter how good that person lives, it doesn't matter how many times that person repents, prays, and confesses, he **cannot** ever be forgiven of this sin!

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Is there a sin God will not forgive? The Scriptures plainly affirm the comforting fact that God is abundantly willing to forgive even the vilest of sinners (Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Matthew 9:13; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Peter 3:9). Yet, the Lord strictly warned:

Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come (Matthew 12:31-32)

How does one reconcile the Master's ominous reproof with the Father's gracious promise?

The context of Jesus' statement helps resolve the difficulty. The Lord had cast a demon out of one who had been blind and mute (Matthew 12:22), whereupon the people confessed him to be Christ (verse 23). The Pharisees replied by charging that, rather than being "the Son of David," Jesus actually cast out demons "by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons" (verse 24). The Master then devastatingly demonstrated the absurdity of this charge (verses 25-30). In reality, Jesus "cast out demons by the Spirit of God" (verse 28; cf. Luke 4:14). Thus, by attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, the Pharisees "blasphemed" the Spirit of God. They employed "impious and reproachful speech injurious of the divine majesty..." (Thayer. 102). Thus, Christ warned them sternly of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31), "Because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:30).

Why is such a sin unpardonable? There is a reason. God is not a despot who acts capriciously for no

reason but “works all things according to the counsel of His will”(Ephesians 1:11).

The Spirit empowered Jesus to work miracles for the express purpose of producing saving faith in Christ (John 20:30-31). One whose heart was so hardened with prejudice that he would attribute the miracles produced by the might of the Spirit of Light to the prince of darkness could never believe (cf. John 12:37-40). It was not and is not a case of the unwillingness or inability of God to forgive a sin. It was and is a matter of the unwillingness and inability of those with hardened hearts to believe that they might be forgiven of sin.

Paul called himself the “chief” among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), but he obtained mercy “as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (verse 16). If God will not forgive a sinner who repents, either Paul was not really chief of sinners, or his salvation is no pattern for ours.

First Timothy 1:15-16 is a comforting passage.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

The fact it is comforting should not lead us to deny it!

God's forgiveness of our sins is a pattern for our forgiveness of those who sin against us (Matthew 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). If there is a sin God will not forgive even if we repent, what sin against me is there that I need not forgive?

The Lord proclaimed to Moses His own nature on Mt. Sinai:

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7)

There are no exceptions, for this is His unchanging, unchangeable nature (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). The Lord God is ever ready to forgive us of any sin if we will repent.

I do not deny the truth the Master affirmed. There is a sin God will not forgive. I allow the context and other passages to explain why. One who commits this sin has so hardened his heart that he cannot be led to faith and repentance.

Other passages apply the same principle to Christians who turn back. “It is impossible” to bring to repentance a Christian who falls away (Hebrews 6:4-6). Then why exhort the Christian who turns to sin to repent? (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20) There is nothing we can do to reach the believer who turns to unbelief, because he knows and has rejected the only thing that can convert the sinner, the gospel of Christ. The problem is a hardened heart.

There are yet infidels and agnostics who are so “uncircumcised in heart and ears” that they ridicule the evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that the Bible is the Word of God. Unless their attitudes change, they can never be saved (Hebrews 2:1-4). This is not because the Father is unwilling or unable to forgive. It is because they cannot believe and repent that he might pardon them. The problem is with the sinner, not with the Lord.

Shrewdness: The Dishonest Steward - Luke 16:1-13

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Everyone in this story is a rascal! The main character is a swindler, who, upon learning he is about to be fired for mismanaging his boss' finances, quickly cheats him twice more before he's put out of office. This manager is too lazy to work and too proud to beg, but not too proud to cheat. The two debtors were willing accomplices. And the master of the story admired the shrewdness of his ex-manager.

How could the Lord possibly use such a story to teach a spiritual lesson? Well, He did, and it very effectively makes a crucial point about our use of wealth.

But be careful. This is not an allegory, such as Galatians 4:21-31, in which each character symbolizes something. It's a parable, with one main point. The characters don't symbolize anyone or anything. They're simply necessary to make the story.

This story is intended for the Master's disciples (verse 1), not just the twelve (Luke 9:1; cf. Matthew 10:2-4), or even the seventy (Luke 10:1), but a group of disciples that included the "tax collectors and sinners" the "Pharisees and scribes complained" about (Luke 15:1-2). The tax collectors especially needed to know to handle their finances in such away as to receive eternal life (cf. Luke 3:12-13), and that's what this parable is about. Probably some of these "tax collectors and sinners" had behaved in much the same way as the unjust steward of the parable, and they may have appreciated the clever misuse of his position as much as the master in the story did.

A rich man calls the manager of his estate onto the carpet because he's heard accusations of mismanagement. The steward is unable to prove by his books that the charges are false, so he is summarily fired. He is dishonest with others but honest in his self evaluation. He's not up to "digging," i.e., farming, and farming is still called "digging" in East Africa, and his vain pride won't permit him to beg. So he quickly comes up with a scheme to cheat the boss yet again and to gain for himself a retirement income. A debtor owes the rich man 100 measures - a measure (bath) equals 8 or 9 gallons - of oil, probably olive oil. He quickly cuts the debt in half. Another debtor owes the master 100 measures (cors, equaling 10-12 bushels each) of wheat. He slices it to 80. Now the debtors are indebted to him. In fact, he has knowledge he can use to blackmail them as willing accomplices to his known thievery. So he'll have room and board when he's unemployed. When the boss finds out, instead of being furious with his crooked manager, he commends his shrewdness! "Worldly people are more clever than enlightened people in dealing with their own (Luke 16:8b, **International Standard Version**).

There's no mistaking the Master's point. "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home" (Luke 16:9). "Mammon" is "wealth, riches ... personified" (Mounce. 1205). Wealth is "unrighteous" in that it is deceitful. It promises security but can be taken away in an instant, even as the steward suddenly loses his source of wealth (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17). Quickly, while you yet have the uncertain riches, before the opportunity is forever lost, use them to gain the true riches, eternal life (Matthew 6:19-20).

And how do we do that? Be generous in contributing to the church (2 Corinthians 9:6-7), in helping the needy (Matthew 25:31-46), and in sending the gospel to the lost (Philippians 4:14-18).

A principle of business is, in order to be entrusted with large responsibilities, one must prove himself by faithfully handling small ones (verse 10). Would you trust your child with a thousand dollars, if he spent his entire five dollar allowance on candy? The Lord will not entrust the riches of heaven to us if we can't handle the material wealth with which He blesses us here (verse 11). If He can't trust us to faithfully use the physical blessings that are not really ours, He won't give us that which we cannot lose, eternal life in heaven (verse 12).

It is impossible to be a slave to two masters (verse 13). To love one is to hate (love less) the other. To be loyal to one is to slight the other. If you live for wealth, you cannot live for God. Be shrewd. Use your wealth as a tool to serve God and so gain the eternal riches.

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