

Matthew 6:24

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-6/matthew-624/>

Jesus teaches that people cannot love both God and wealth. They must choose one or the other. We can do what God commands, which is to serve and love other people; or we can love wealth and obey what its lusts require. It is one or the other, it can't be both.

The parallel account of this teaching is found in Luke 16:13.

Jesus shares an important principle. Just as a servant only has *one* master whom he serves, so too, does our heart. *No one can serve two masters.* Our heart obeys only *one* master at a time.

Whenever a servant or a heart has *two masters* giving him orders, *he will* only be able to follow *one* of them. Jesus illustrates through an inverted statement (like a chiasm): *For either he will hate the one* (the first master) *and love the other* (the second master), *or he will be devoted to one* (the second master) *and despise the other* (the first master.) *He cannot serve and be devoted to both.* Indeed, he cannot even *love* both. The servant will follow either *the one* or *the other*.

Jesus then names the *two masters*. *You cannot serve God and wealth.* Only one of these *masters* can be the controlling influence of your life. This is a principle that shows how vital it is to have an eye that can see the light of truth (v. 22).

If *God* is your master, *you will love* Him and *be devoted to* Him. You will seek the reward of pleasing Him. You will, like Jesus, *despise* anything that keeps you from pleasing Him (Hebrews 12:2). This would include the demands, the ridicule, shame, or persecution that come from anything in the world that tries to be your *master*. If *God* is our master, our primary concern is not to try to get ahead in this life by accumulating *wealth*. We will *despise* the lust for *wealth* compared to following God. We will be a generous and wise steward of the *wealth* He grants into our hands. Instead of storing up our *wealth* on earth, and trusting in it to bring us fulfillment, we will forward it (and our hearts) to heaven.

If *wealth* is our master, we will lust for it and *be devoted to* its demands. We will be consumed by the pursuit of hoarding it. The lust for *wealth* is a master that is never satisfied. This principle is stated clearly in the Old Testament: "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). The lust for *wealth* (a common master of this world and its kingdoms) is at direct odds with *God* and His kingdom.

If the lust for *wealth* is our master, we *will hate* *God* and His commands to *love* and serve other people. Instead of using whatever *wealth* that *God* puts into our hands to enlarge His kingdom and bless others (and according to Jesus's teachings, bless ourselves in the process), we defiantly seek to carve out our own kingdom in opposition to *God*. When people have *wealth* as a master, it leads to disharmony and unrighteousness. When we view *wealth* in comparison to others, then we must have "more" than the one to whom we compare. We seek to push them down as well as

to elevate ourselves. As the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, “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” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Again, we see that the ultimate issue pertains to the inner workings of the heart and its loves. There may be *two* (or more) *masters* barking out commands, but the servant can only choose to follow *one* of them. When desires are in conflict, the heart will follow *the one* it loves.

In telling His disciples, *You cannot serve God and wealth*, Jesus is asking them: which of these *two masters* are you going to *love*? Which *will you despise*? Which *will you serve*? It has a ring of Joshua 24:15, “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...” Jesus is speaking to His disciples, so these are believers. Jesus is not speaking of how to be born into God’s family. These listeners already have God as their *Father*. Jesus is teaching them how to choose perspectives and actions that lead to our greatest benefit. Being enslaved to *wealth* is clearly not in our best interest.

The Apostle Paul tells us another benefit we gain when we do not have *wealth* as a *master*. We learn to be content (Phil 4:11-13). When we are not living a life of comparison, we can enjoy what we have, rather than being enslaved to the master of “More.”

Biblical Text

6:24 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.