*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 12 - 17

Manage Treasure Wisely

**Monday, October 12 Matthew 6:19-24**

*“Choose your master: God or wealth”*

In our daily Christian lives we will encounter a number of concerns that have the potential to deter us from loyalty to God. One of these is wealth. The accumulation of wealth for its own sake is deceptive, because one can find in material treasure a false sense of security. But, says Jesus, such accumulation is temporary, at best, for there are forces (represented here by moth, rust, and thieves) that cause earthly treasure to diminish in value and finally be destroyed.

Just as there are two treasures of the heart (earthly and heavenly), there are also two eyes of the heart (healthy and unhealthy). The healthy eye sees treasure as being for the work and glory of God; the unhealthy eye sees treasure as being for the work and glory of self. Finally, there are two masters of the heart (God and money). Our loyalty will be to one or the other – one we will “love” and the other we will “hate.” Biblically, love and hate are patterns of life, not simply emotional reactions. To love is to give ourselves completely, and to hate is to reject anything that hinders our attachment to what we love.

*You are my master, Lord, and you alone will I serve. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 13 Romans 15:1-4**

*“Not to please ourselves . . . Christ did not please himself”*

All of us have the inbuilt desire to please ourselves. This quite naturally leads to all kinds of selfishness and independence which are responsible for many ills experienced in the family of Christ. The Christian is called to have a renewed mind (Romans 12:2), a mind no longer conformed to the selfish patterns of this world but transformed to follow God’s will which includes the development of a ministering-to-the-needs-of-others mentality.

Thus, says Paul, it is the strong in Christ who are willing to voluntarily and sacrificially set aside things that please themselves when, by doing so, they are able to meet the needs of a neighbor. To make such a decision and to adopt such an attitude requires spiritual maturity. This comes from two sources. First, there is the understanding that Christian life in the community of the church involves support for the building up of the kingdom ministry of the church. Second, there is the desire to give the glory to God. There is little that brings honor to the Lord in the actions of a self-centered Christian.

*Selfless Christ, I commit to pleasing you with the decisions I make. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 14 1 Corinthians 16:1-4**

*“Now about the collection for God’s people”*

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians reached its highest peak with his discussion of the hope of life beyond the grave and of the nature of the resurrection in chapter 15. In this closing chapter the mood changes as he attends to what would be called today a few “housekeeping matters.” That he would put his discussion of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the offering for the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem so close together without any sense of inappropriateness shows us the all-inclusiveness of Paul’s letter.

While these are not rules or commandments to be adhered to with legalistic rigidity, they contain great wisdom and insight on the matter of Christian charity. Everyone was to be involved in the offering whether they had little or much to give. The system Paul suggested was that each week as they met to worship, they add to the offering. This giving should reflect each member’s own circumstances. He closed his brief comments by saying that there should be careful administration of the money that was raised.

*Dear Jesus, when I give to your ministry I grow in my love for you. Amen.*

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**Thursday, October 15 2 Corinthians 9:6-11**

*“The Lord loves a cheerful giver”*

The agricultural illustration is used by Paul to make a very important spiritual point: a person who continues to be preoccupied with accumulating material things and does not develop a spirit of generosity will fall short of realizing any true joy related to their possessions. In contrast, equally successful people who are generous will find joy both in what they give away and in what they retain - they are becoming the “cheerful giver” that the Lord loves. Further, Paul makes it clear that this principle will only work when people are free to make their own purposeful and deliberate decisions about giving.

Paul must have anticipated that someone might argue, “If I give to help others all it’s going to do is make me a poor person who will need to be helped.” Paul’s answer is simply that the God who gave you what you have right now is the God who will continue to provide you with enough not only to meet your own needs, but also with enough to help others. When we insist that we are not able to give cheerfully to the cause of Christ, we end up contradicting God’s promises to us.

*Create in me, Lord, a spirit of cheerful generosity. Amen.*

**Friday, October 16 Deuteronomy 26:12-15**

*“I have obeyed the Lord my God”*

The ceremony described in these verses tells of the tithe (10% of what a person had produced) that was distributed every third year among various classes of persons. After distributing the tithe, the worshipper made a three-part declaration in the presence of God: a positive statement (verse 13), a negative statement (verse 14), and a prayer (verse 15).

In the positive statement, the Israelite declares his fulfillment of the law. The negative statement, though no longer completely clear in its meaning, affirms that the task has been carried out properly, pointing out certain factors which, if present, would have nullified the fulfillment of the tithe law. The closing prayer both affirms the majesty of God (he lives in heaven) and the love of God (he hears the prayers of his people). It requests God’s continued blessing – continued, because the ability to give the tithe is a sign that the Israelites were already experiencing the grace of God.

*God who provides, I thank you for all you have given me by your grace. You have blessed me that I may graciously give and be a blessing to others. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 17 Matthew 19:16-22**

*“He went sadly away because he had many possessions”*

This passage does not suggest that wealth is wrong, but it does suggest that there is something about wealth that can choke off the effectiveness of the gospel and keep one from entering God’s kingdom. The rich young man sensed a lack in his life that could not be filled with his own religious efforts. Jesus knew full well the controlling issue of the rich young man’s life – it was his wealth, which provided him power, significance, and status. It had become the god of his life.

Jesus called him to exchange it for following him. The young man’s turning away is tragic, but it becomes a powerful illustration of the way we need to keep short account of what is ruling our lives. Even Christians can misplace their allegiance, so each person must be honest with himself or herself to know what is the treasure of the heart. At stake is Jesus’ place as the Savior of our life. In order to claim Jesus as Savior, each person must remove the “god” of his or her life so that Jesus alone is God.

*Show me, Lord, if there are any “gods” in my life that I need to remove. Amen.*