

NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

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TRANSFORMED
WORKING LIFE

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Work is a first class calling

No one can serve two masters

Hope –the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Renewing the mind

Working from rest

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Fruitfulness

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INTRODUCTION

This must be one of the most pertinent questions you can ask yourself, whether Christian or non Christian - 'Who am I serving?'

Indeed, many will think the question does not apply to them because they are not consciously serving anyone - but have we stopped to consider the question?

Many of us have worked for a long time with a good ethical code, fully based on the bible, and yet have not appreciated the full meaning of the gospel.

This booklet is designed to completely clarify the issue so that the reader is left in no doubt, both of his/her own position and the full biblical position.

CHAPTER 1

AM I A FREE MAN?

Yes. Definitely. Christ has set me free. *'Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.'*

Galatians 5:1.

'Therefore if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.'

John 8:36

But then as we read on in the scripture we come across scriptures which seem at first sight to contradict this notion of freedom.

'Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price.' (from 1 Corinthians 7:22-23)

The truth is that we are set free. That is we are free from death and sin and the ways of this world. We need no longer be subject to the power of sin that would like to entangle us - we are free.

Freed by Jesus

Freedom came by the death and sacrifice of Jesus. As a free and sinless man Himself, He purchased our freedom by dying in our stead. For we were dead in trespasses and sins - we were locked into a terminal state and we could not in any way extract ourselves. It took His intervention on our behalf - but it cost Him dear. It cost Jesus His own life.

That is why the scripture says that we were bought with a price. Bought, that is purchased, carries the concept that the purchaser now owns the thing purchased. Perhaps I am not as free as I thought. Indeed, if I take this at face value Jesus owns me, all of me.

'You were bought with a price - therefore glorify God in your body.'

1 Corinthians 6:20

Here we have the basis of this booklet - we have been bought with a price, an inestimable price. This price we could not repay even if we wanted to try to obtain the title deeds to our own lives. Jesus is the owner.

Wonderful freedom

One of the wonderful aspects of the gospel is this - although Jesus owns me and could demand that I do exactly what He wants me to do, He does not impose His will over mine. Instead He gradually brings me round to His way of thinking. The result is wonderful freedom. We are free and we feel free and at the same time Jesus is bringing us round to His purposes –to submission to His will - a paradox.

What will we conclude then to our question, ‘Am I a free man?’

Gloriously free from death, darkness and sin. Fully able to make my own decisions for my life and yet, at the same time, being drawn more and more towards the very purposes of God for my life.

Yes, free to choose life.

The gospel of love

The true gospel centres around love. The love of the Father to send His only Son as a sacrifice. The love of Jesus enabled Him to come and face the cruel crucifixion.

It is as we increasingly appreciate the love God has poured towards us and as we appropriate His love - so we become more and more willing to see our wills aligned to His will. We come not really as servants but ‘love slaves,’ in the sense that Jesus becomes everything to us.

We become like the apostle Paul - *‘I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.’* Philippians 3:8

The gospel of love is progressive

For most of us the gospel of love will be progressive - that means it will continually increase. Truly our relationship with the Lord may suffer ups and downs - we may backslide for a while. The good shepherd knows His sheep and how to look after His sheep.

We can co-operate with the progressive gospel of love by reciprocating God’s love. *‘Love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’* We have a part to play! We can love the Lord.

In fact we can express our love for the Lord by simply speaking it out to Him or by thinking it in our minds. We can increase our love for the Lord - not by our human endeavour, but by asking the Holy Spirit to increase our love for the Father and for Jesus and for Himself.

The full experience of real freedom comes with the full experience of God's love.

We will feel most fulfilled when our lives fulfil the purpose for which the Lord created and saved us.

This is real freedom, real satisfaction, and real fulfilment - Knowing that Christ has set me free and willingly following in His footsteps as my Master.

Forgiveness is a wonderful thing

The love that Jesus has for us is demonstrated in the fact that, not only does He fully forgive us all our iniquities, but also, He gives His own life to pay the due penalty of sin.

As we follow in the Masters footsteps He calls us to forgive. Because we have been forgiven all our iniquities we are encouraged, even instructed by Jesus, to forgive those who offend us.

Indeed if we don't forgive (and forgiveness is an act of the will) we will not find the glorious freedom we have speaking of in this chapter. Indeed a spiritual law comes into play. Jesus went to great lengths to make this truth very clear to His disciples by telling them a parable - it is recorded for us in
Matthew 18: 21-35

'How many times must I forgive' - asks Peter.

Jesus replies with the parable of the two servants. The first owes his master a fortune and is forgiven. The second owes the first a small amount. Yet, even though his master forgave him a fortune, he doesn't forgive his fellow slave a small amount.

Jesus gives us a warning. The unforgiving slave is delivered to the torturers - now he must repay his master after all, forgiveness of the debt has been withdrawn.

'So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brothers trespasses.'

Whilst we have received glorious freedom in Jesus, He is urging us to give to others that same freedom - with a stern warning of the consequences of keeping others locked in unforgiveness.

It is not a matter of the emotions - they will frequently want to keep people locked in unforgiveness - it is a matter of choice of the will.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS IS LORD - THIS IS THE KINGDOM

Every kingdom needs a king, otherwise it is not a kingdom. We talk of the kingdom of God - by our definition a place where Jesus is King. A place where Jesus is supreme ruler.

So, who are we serving? Who is the supreme ruler of my life and yours? Can we honestly say that Jesus is the ruler of my life?

In order to say, 'yes,' it means that we know what Jesus wants of us and that we do what He wants. It means we know His will. It means we hear His voice.

Stewards of His possessions

One of the most fundamental things is to see that Jesus is the rightful owner of this world and everything in it.

'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.' Psalm 24:1

Then let us see that He has appointed us to a position of stewardship of what actually belongs to Him.

My home, my car, my possessions are actually His. I am a steward. My job, my business, my work, my time are actually His, I am a steward.

Recognise you are a steward - I believe that this is the major key to serving the One Master who is entitled to our service and worthy to receive it.

How do we know that we are acting as stewards of that which belongs to Him?

Surely, the answer is simple. Do we consult Him in the decision making process of our lives or do we make our own decisions? If we are consulting Him and doing what we believe He tells us to do - then we are acting as stewards. If we make our own decisions and tack on a 'please bless this Lord,' then we are acting as masters not stewards.

Hearing His voice

How will we be able to serve Him by obeying Him if we do not know what He is saying. How can we act as stewards of His possessions if we don't know His instructions?

We need to develop the ability to hear His voice. Jesus said: *'My sheep hear My voice.'*

Many true believers have difficulty in hearing the voice of the Lord - if this is your experience then you are not alone. In this series there is a booklet called 'Hearing God Speak,' which is designed to help.

In one sense hearing God is a skill which can be developed. In another sense there is God's sovereignty - He will speak as and when He wants to speak. A lot of us do actually hear the Lord speak to us far more frequently than we acknowledge - simply because we have not trained ourselves to distinguish His voice. It is well worth working at.

Certainly Jesus is the Lord and King.

Certainly he wants to be able to communicate with us and direct our paths.

What point would there be in being the great and mighty King if you could never rule your kingdom, because nobody ever listened to you?

'You chart my path ahead of me'

Psalm 139:3
(Living Bible)

CHAPTER 3

NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS - MAMMON

Lets meet Jesus speaking - it is the first major teaching situation recorded for us in the gospels. It is well known - as the 'Sermon on the mount.'

The context is Jesus speaking to a large crowd of Jews - or at least mainly of Jews. These are folk who have considerable knowledge of the Law and the Old Testament as a whole. They have been brought up with the knowledge of the scriptures.

Jesus speaking: *Blessed are the poor in spirit*
Blessed are those who mourn
Blessed are the me
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after
righteousness
Blessed are the merciful
Blessed are the pure in heart
Blessed are the peacemakers
Blessed are the those who are persecuted for
righteousness sake
Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you
 Matthew 5 2-11

Surely His listeners would have remembered Deuteronomy 28 - the major 'blessing' passage of the Torah and surely they would have been astonished at what Jesus was saying. For Jesus is bringing a radically different message.

Look at the message in Deuteronomy - keep the law and all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you:

Blessed shall you be in the city
Blessed shall you be in the country
Blessed shall be the fruit of your body

*Blessed shall be the produce of your ground
Blessed shall be the increase of your herds
Blessed shall be your basket
Blessed shall be your kneading bowl
Blessed shall you be coming in
Blessed shall you be going out*

Deuteronomy 28:2-6

The impact of Jesus message would have been stunning. No longer the adherence to a Law - but now a heart attitude that would be impossible to attain.

Jesus says to them:

'Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 5:20

Jesus was showing that all our efforts at righteousness would not be enough. Later He reveals that He will impute righteousness to those who believe in Him - His righteousness imputed to us as a gift. His righteousness is enough because He fulfilled the Law.

Jesus has set a new standard.

No one can serve two masters

It is in the sermon on the mount that we find Jesus making these statements and it is here, in the same sermon, we find the first teaching about money.

His audience had been used to a complicated system of Law - a system which required tithes and offerings. Everything was very specific and carefully laid down.

Now Jesus uses a Jewish idiom to bring in a new attitude to money and possessions:

Let us look at Jesus teaching about money in the sermon on the mount:

'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

'The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole

body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness.'

'No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.'
Matthew 6:22-24

The idiom contained in this passage is well known - the meaning is simple: *'If your eye is good your whole body is full of light,'* is known to mean generosity. *'But if your eye is bad your whole body is full of darkness,'* is known to mean stinginess and meanness.

Jesus is giving us a new commandment regarding our attitude to money - be generous, look for opportunities to be generous - and money / Mammon will have no hold over you. You cannot serve two masters.

A completely different view of money and possessions

So, now we can see that Jesus is bringing a completely new vision - He is looking at something far above the demands of the Law. Where the Jews had seen material riches as a sign of God's blessing - now they were to look for a richness of character.

Sometimes it will take while for our thinking to adjust. It is clear from the account of the rich young ruler that the disciples were still associating riches with God's blessing.

'Assuredly I say to you it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, who then can be saved?'
Matthew 19:23-25

Even though Jesus had set the new standard in the sermon on the mount, the disciples were still associating material riches with being a sign of God's blessing. In fact, so much so, that they were astonished when Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

Hard. Yes, because the pull of money, wealth, riches, mammon on a man's heart is very strong. Although Jesus describes money as a very small thing we give it great credence - in fact far too much credence.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

In Matthew 6 verses 19 and 20 Jesus urges us to take a heavenly view of our investments - lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven - invest in your eternal future. Giving and generous giving becomes His norm:

'Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use it will be measured back to you..' Luke 6:38

Generosity is the overwhelming call of the New Testament. Consider the apostle Paul:

'But this I say, He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.'

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Our attitude to money is a heart matter. Here Paul is saying there is no compulsion, no obligation, rather the Lord is looking for an attitude of heart that is cheerful and generous in giving. Only the Holy Spirit can make us like this - why not ask Him to change you into a generous and cheerful giver - or make you even more so if you are already.

Then:

'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.'

2 Corinthians 9:8

Abundance - the promise of God

Here we have it, an amazing promise. You will always have sufficient in all things. You will also have an abundance for every good work. For every good work - that is to sow again into the Kingdom with cheerfulness and generosity as you are led by the Spirit in your giving.

Sowing and reaping

Surely the scripture will be proved to be true:

'Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.'

Galatians 6:7-8

As in other things, with the use of our money we can either sow to the flesh - that is to focus upon our own benefit, or we can see the needs of others and respond with cheerfulness as the Spirit leads us and in so doing we can lay up treasures in heaven.

The New Testament gives the following guidelines for giving:

Give to meet the need.

Allow yourself to be moved by Godly compassion.

Give as God directs you.

Look upon your giving as the firstfruit of your increase.

Be generous.

How will I know if I am serving Mammon?

Let us ask ourselves a few questions to see if we can determine whether we are serving God or Mammon.

- Am I a generous and a cheerful giver?
- Or I am giving under some sort of compulsion?
- Do I decide whether or not to take a course of action based on whether or not I can afford it, or do I first seek the Lord's will and then seek His provision for it.
- Am I putting money away for the future in a storehouse - like a pension fund for example? If so, did I first read Matthew 6:19, and did I ask the Lord if it is His will for me to store up money on earth rather than in heaven
- Could I describe myself as a cheerful, even hilarious giver?
- Do I ask the Lord about financial matters and expect to hear His reply?
- Am I relying on having money in my pocket or account? How do I cope when money is short?
- Do I see the gospel as a means of greater and greater material blessing?

- Do I pay my debts on time or do I hold back to the last possible moment?
- Am I willing to freely lend to those who ask me, subject to the guidance of the Spirit?
- Which interests me the most sowing or reaping?
- Is my work and business driven by profit or is it driven by direction from the Lord?
- Do you accept work just because it is offered (and the money looks good) or do you ask the Lord?

Breaking free of Mammon

Mammon literally means ‘that in which you place your trust’ with emphasis on wealth and possessions. Breaking free of the hold of Mammon is not easy.

We have already mentioned the rich young ruler. Here is a young man who wants to know - ‘*Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*’ Jesus points him to the Law - keep the commandments. The young man realised that he still lacked something - even though he had kept the commandments that Jesus mentioned to him all his life.

‘If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me’ Matthew 19:16-22

The rich young ruler could not do that - he went away sorrowful. His problem was that he did not possess his possessions - they possessed him.

YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON - it is impossible.

It is an issue of the heart

The issue is a love issue. None of us loves the Lord as he should - however the more we love Him the greater and greater will be the desire to obey His commands. We know this from our normal experience - we do not wish to hurt or to cross the ones we love.

Because we do not naturally have a great deal of love for Jesus, the answer lies in asking the Holy Spirit to fill us with more and more love for Jesus. Keep asking - you can always be more in love with Him every day.

As we become more and more in love with Him so our confidence in His promises increases and increases - it becomes easier and easier to trust Him and thus to become more and more generous with the wealth that flows through our stewardship.

How about you - Are you serving God or Mammon?

Not sure? Why not ask the Holy Spirit to show you?

Why not ask the Holy Spirit to change you into a cheerful giver?

CHAPTER 4

MONEY IS THE LEAST THING

Who would believe it today?

Money is the least - that is the smallest, the least important - the thing of littlest significance - that is how Jesus describes money.

When by far the greatest volume of world trade is in financial instruments rather than actual goods or services - who would believe that money is the least thing.

When there are pressures on all sides to borrow, to invest, to speculate - who would believe that money is the least thing.

Yet this is the message of Jesus - be faithful in that which is least.

Lets take a look at one of the parables about money - it is in Luke 16

He who is unjust in what is least - Luke 16:1-13

In this parable the steward is about to be deprived of his stewardship. He cannot bring himself to beg and cannot dig - how will he survive when he loses his job.

(It is worth remembering that the 'unjust steward' is not a believer, and neither is his master - this is just the story of a worldly situation)

The steward comes up with a plan - in collusion with the masters creditors he reduces their debt to the master so that he that he will find favour with them after his dismissal.

The master recognises a certain shrewdness in the actions of the 'unjust' steward. He is not applauding his actions but recognises that the stewards is 'looking after himself.' That is shrewd from the world's viewpoint.

In verse 8 we find Jesus making a comment about the actions of the unjust steward.

'The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.'

Jesus goes on... *'And I say to you, make friends for yourself by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.'* Your translation may say, *'that when it fails...'* making it sound like money will fail. The translation is not correct. The Greek clearly says *'that when you fail.'*

Fail here is 'expire' rather like a battery - it gives good service all its life until it expires. It is a reference to death. When you expire 'they' may receive you into an everlasting home.

'They may welcome you into an everlasting home' refers to the welcome that believers will receive when they go to be with the Lord in glory. The welcomers being the holy angels of God and those who have gone ahead to glory. As a matter of contrast the *'sons of this world'* will spend eternity excluded from the presence of God.

Jesus is saying - get smart over the use of money all the time you are alive on earth, invest it in heaven. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

We need a new vision of money - it does not have the importance we have given it. We are called to faithful with this little thing.

CHAPTER 5

MAMMON THE AGENT OF BABYLON

The question of serving Mammon has something very important at its root. We easily think of money and Mammon as being interchangeable - that is not exactly true. Money becomes Mammon when we place our trust in it. The difficulty for us is in being really honest with ourselves - are we placing our trust in money or not?

We certainly do not want to confess to this error and yet it is so easy to fall into it.

There is a saying, 'money makes the world go round.' In a literal sense this is entirely untrue - but in a practical and commercial sense it is true. Money is a strong driving force. Money was designed as a means of exchange - but it has taken on the role of a store of value.

Now when people want money for itself - i.e. they store it up and want to accumulate more and more - it becomes the object of love, an idol and when our trust is placed in it then it is becoming Mammon.

Satan has always wanted the worship of people and worship and love go virtually hand in hand. The power behind Mammon is no less than the Satanic kingdom - expressed very often by the word Babylon.

So we need to ask ourselves whether or not we are operating in Babylon - especially so, in view of the warning in Revelation 18 and the exhortation; '*Come out of her My people.*' (The warning is addressed to believers not unbelievers!)

Am I in Babylon?

In order to answer this question we are going to take a look at what is meant by 'Babylon.'

The problem of identification of Babylon is heightened by the fact that in Revelation she is represented by a harlot riding a beast and in Revelation 18 by a city.

So what is meant by Babylon? Where are its origins?

Meet Nimrod he son of Cush - the grandson of Noah

‘Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.” And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.’
Genesis 10:9

Nimrod was literally a mighty hunter - renowned for clearing his area of wild animals. He became a man of renown. He set his face ‘before’ the Lord - it means against or better ‘instead of’ the Lord. He began to set up his own kingdom.

Nimrod set about building in his own strength and for his own ends. Nimrod wanted to dominate.

Nimrod started with Babel and quickly added to his kingdom other cities - Erech, Accad and Calneh, then Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah and Resen. Nimrod had a kingdom. Nimrod had a wife, Seminaris and a son, Tammuz.

Nimrod died fairly young. His wife Seminaris started the worship of Nimrod to safeguard her own position as Queen - so the deification of man was introduced.

We can see here a development:

Firstly, we have man now relying entirely upon himself and denying God.

Secondly, we have the introduction of the worship of man as if he were a god.

Thirdly, we have the introduction of the concept of the ‘Queen of heaven,’ in the person of Seminaris.

When humans set about worshipping anyone other than the Lord Himself, in come all sorts of errors and all sorts of demonic influence. Nimrod became an antichrist figure. (anti, is used here in the meaning of ‘instead of’)

So here is the foundation of what has become today an enormous network of anti-god and occult activity. Most false gods and most ‘Queen of heaven’ types can be traced back to Nimrod and Seminaris, including for example:

Nimrod:	Seminaris:
Orion	Rhea
Brahm	
Tammuz	Venus
Bacchus	Diana
Ninus	
Osiris	Isis
Iswara	Isi
Asshur	
..and so on	... and so on

(For further research: The Two Babylons by Rev A Hislop published by Partridge)

Ancestor worship

With the deification and worship of Nimrod we see the beginning of the worship of ancestors. Nimrod was evil, setting up his own kingdom in opposition to the living God. His kingdom became infested with demonic forces (Revelation 18:2.) Today, in some cultures, demons mimic human ancestors in order to receive worship and to control people. Christians can have absolutely nothing to do with consulting the dead, whether they be ‘ancestors’ or not.

Am I working in Babylon?

So now we are ready to address our question. The answer should be simple to see:

If we are relying entirely or even mostly upon ourselves and our effort then we are on the verge of entering into a Babylonian way of doing things.

If we are using occult powers, new age powers, freemasonry, spiritism, bribery, manipulation, horoscopes and the like to establish and promote of business or working lives, then we are most certainly working in Babylon.

If we are controlled by money - that is if our decisions are dependent on money, or if we are storing up money for ourselves - then we may be to some degree (or we should at least consider if we could be) caught up in the Babylonian way of doing things.

The Babylonian system is anti Christian.

'I saw the woman (just named as Mystery Babylon) drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' Revelation 17:6

The system is strongly against us as followers of Jesus. Many of us have traded within the system and ended up destroyed or partly destroyed by it, others of us have traded in the system and survived, even prospered. But now the call to come out of the system is stronger than ever.

Come out of relying upon self effort.
Come out of using 'worldly' methods of doing things
Come out of using spiritual power for your own ends.

Revelation 17:16 tell us that the harlot, Mystery Babylon' is made desolate, and Revelation 18 tells us graphically of the downfall of the City of Babylon.

Whatever you may think of the interpretation of the details of these passages - the message is clear - Come out of Babylon, it is doomed.

CHAPTER 6

AM I SERVING MYSELF?

One alternative to having Jesus as King is that we set ourselves up as our own kings - if we are not serving Jesus we are serving someone else - it is easy to set ourselves up as king without even thinking about it.

Indeed, one would say that the majority of people serve themselves most of the time. Even Christians who should be serving Jesus can easily fall into the same trap. The bible calls that following after the flesh.

Are your prayers frequently answered? If not, have you considered what James has to say on the matter:

'You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.'
James 4:3

'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God.'
Romans 8:5-8

Yet we have been saved, even transferred from death to life and from darkness to life. It is our destiny to be like Jesus (1John 3:2, and 4:17) How many are actually living out their destiny?

There is a problem here. The flesh lusts against the Spirit.

'For the flesh lusts (has strong desires) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish.'

Galatians 5:17

It is far easier to live according to the flesh rather than according to the Spirit. Therefore it is far easier to serve oneself than to serve Jesus the King of Kings.

Who is King of your life?

Have you actually faced the question yourself? Are you serving Jesus or yourself?

Probably a truthful answer would at best be partial. I.e. I am serving Jesus to some extent. Jesus declared that our fruitfulness is the result of abiding in the vine - the vine, of course, referring to Himself.

That means spending time with the King - a good indication of whether or not Jesus is the King will be the amount your attention that He gets. Does Jesus get your attention and your communication?

Or is most of your attention fixed upon your own well being? I need this and I need that as if the whole world revolves around ME!

He who loses his life finds it.

Jesus said:

'He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.'
John 12:25

This statement comes immediately after Jesus describes the destiny of a grain of wheat - if it drops into the ground and dies it will produce a harvest - if not it remains alone. Jesus is saying in the strongest terms possible - we should die to ourselves - die to the flesh, so that we too can produce a harvest of fruit.

Breaking free of self

Paul knew all about this:

'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.'
Galatians 2:20

We start to break free of serving ourselves when we take on this line of thinking. I am dead to myself - it is now Jesus who is living through me - therefore my life will become more and more like His life.

Life does not consist of a man's `possessions but of his eternal destiny.....

How can you tell whether you are serving yourself?

It should be easy.

- How much of your thinking is about your own future, your own problems, your own business, your own family and so on?
- How much of your prayer life is about yourself and your own needs?
- How much of your time is given to others in need?
- How much of your money and wealth is given away? How much is hoarded up for the future?
- If the Lord asked you to give all your money away, how would you react?
- If the Lord asked you to give all your possessions away, how would you react?
- Do you have ambitions to succeed in your career? What if the Lord asked you to give up your work and serve Him on the mission field, or in some other way?

The question is this: ‘which comes first in your life, the will of God or your own will?’

Is Jesus really THE LORD of your life? Really?

CHAPTER 7

AM I SERVING THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD?

Many good Christian people have spent much of their working lives going about their everyday business with a good ethical and moral code, yet without coming into the position of relating to the Lord as Sovereign Communicator.

In my own experience I had great difficulty in learning how to hear the Lord speak to me. I did have the expectation that He would speak - as the scripture says: *'My sheep hear My voice.'* However my confession was, 'I cannot hear God speak' and 'God does not speak to me.'

The scripture continued to say, *'My sheep hear My voice'* and I continued in my lack of hearing for a number of years. Although for much of that time I was living according to Christian principles, and I certainly had been born again, there was no living communication between me and my Lord.

Looking back over this period I can only confess that I was not actively serving God at all and I certainly was not a steward of the things He had called me to do - simply because without that living communication I had no certainty that I was in His will and no indication of His plans.

Jesus said, *'If you are not for Me you are against Me.'* Certainly I was 'for' Jesus in principle, but in actions it was a different matter. I was on a career path no different from those who do not know Jesus as Saviour.

Looking back I would now say that at least to some extent I was serving the prince of this world - not knowingly - but my life and actions were not advancing the Kingdom of God, because I did not know what the Great King wanted.

Breaking free of the prince of this world

One of the first issues in breaking free from serving the prince of this world is to recognise that the King has specific plans for you:

'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'

Ephesians 2:10

Yes, a specific plan for each of His children.

Then determine to walk in that plan:

In Jeremiah 42 we find the Israelites asking Jeremiah to seek the Lord on their behalf, *'that the Lord your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do.'* (Verse 3)

'Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.' (Verse 6)

So far that sounds very good. They are seeking to know the Lord's will. However, when we read on, we find that they did not like the instruction Jeremiah brought them. They wanted to go back to Egypt - Jeremiah told them that the Lord was instructing them not to go back - but instead to stay in the land.

There was even a promise of blessing - *'I will build you up and not tear you down do not be afraid of your enemies, I will save you and deliver you.'*
(from verse 10 and 11)

Yet they could not accept the message from Jeremiah. They preferred the supposed safety of Egypt. Are we falling into the same trap?

If we are going to walk in the way God has prepared for us, it is going to be a walk of faith. Almost by definition our flesh is not going to like the idea very much - because the flesh lusts against the Spirit. We are going to have to be tough with our carnal nature - not to let it make us serve either the flesh or the prince of this world.

The prince of this world

Satan is described as the prince of this world and one thing he will certainly want you to do is focus yourself strongly on this world.

In contrast to that we are urged to be looking for the glorious appearing of Jesus:

'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious

appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.
2:11-13

Titus

We are not proposing a super-spiritual view - but a realistic view. The Master will return - the good servant will be found doing His Master's will but the bad servant will not looking for Him and will be caught unawares. (from Matthew 24:45-51)

The prince of this world would have you so focussed on the things of this world that you forget the real Master.

We should have our feet firmly on the ground - that is doing our work to the very best of our ability and way beyond through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. At the same time having a strong awareness that Jesus is returning soon.

The prince has helpers

The prince of this world has a network of fallen angels to help him 'run' his kingdom.

You will find them listed in Ephesians 6:

'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'

We read earlier that once we rely upon our own effort it can lead right through to being strongly influenced by demonic and occult powers.

The powers of this world promote greed, selfishness, slander, boasting, anger and so on and so on - in fact they promote the things the flesh so often enjoys.

We are told to deny ourselves ungodly lusts and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in Romans 12:2.

It is time for a change of thinking.

I will not serve my own selfish desires.

I will not serve the prince of this world.

I will not be caught up in the Babylonian system.

I will not serve money.

As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

CHAPTER 8

TRULY A STEWARD

So we come to one of the most important aspects of the Christian life. Here is how we can achieve the statements of the last chapter.

We are saved by grace, but faith without works is dead. According to James now that we are believers we should also be workers - that is of course, workers for the Lord.

Jesus said, *'Take My yoke upon you and you will find rest for your souls.'* So we can see that we are expected to be yoked to Jesus - that is a very important principle. We are not called to rush about thinking up 'works' that we can do to please Him. Rather we are called to be yoked to Him. So we become co-workers with him.

Jesus said, *'The Son can do nothing of Himself.'* In like manner we can do nothing of ourselves.

Jesus said, *'What the Father does the Son does also.'* In like manner we are expected to do the things the Father does.

Jesus said, *'When the Spirit of truth comes He will lead you into all truth, He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will take that which is of Mine and disclose it to you.'*

We are called to be like Jesus.

Truly a steward.

All things belong to Jesus:

'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.'

Psalm 24:1

Jesus gives us things to look after on His behalf. He gives us our very life breath. He gives us abilities and talents and He gives us gifts.

What He wants of us in return is an account of our stewardship. This is not the same as saying He wants a 10% slice of our increase - no, we will be required to give an account of 100%.

Consider the parable of the talents. (Matthew 25:14-30) The point is that the stewards have to give an account of all their stewardship. A steward does not consider that he owns anything - rather the Master owns everything and trusts his belongings to the steward.

The Master gives over to the steward valuable assets, for the steward to oversee. The steward is expected to use those assets and increase them - i.e. to be fruitful.

When the Master returns He wants an account of everything - it is all His.

Take on the mindset of a steward.

It takes some readjustment to our thinking - Jesus owns me, all of me.

'For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which are God's.'

1 Corinthians 6:20

Certainly, if Jesus owns me, and He does, then He is entitled to my complete surrender to Him.

My life is not my life, it is His, and He appoints me a steward.

My family is not my family, it is His, and He appoints me a steward.

My business is not my business, it is His business, and He appoints me as a steward.

Everything I have is not mine, it is His and He appoints me as a steward.

If we truly going to do the good works that James speaks about it starts with recognising that we are stewards of that which belongs to Jesus.

Have you ever heard of a master who does not give His steward instructions? Therefore we should expect to hear from our master also.

This is it then - I am going to reckon that everything is His and that He allows me to be steward of that which is His. I own nothing.

CHAPTER 9

STEWARDSHIP

What can we say about effective stewardship?

Surely it must start with the commitment to know and understand the Master's will - His plans - His desires for my life, my family, my work, my everything – for everything is His.

Surely the commitment to actually do the Master's will must be there as well.

Surely the knowledge that we are to give an account will help to focus our thinking.

Power to function

Jesus said, *'without Me you can do nothing.'* (John 15:5). Yet Jesus is not physically here. We need Him, how is His help, His empowering going to be administered?

How are we going to be able to please Him - even if we understand what is required and even when we are completely surrendered to His will?

The key to successful fulfilment of the Master's wishes is to receive and flow in the Masters empowering.

Jesus said, *'It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.'*

John 16:7

The Lord has provided power for us to function in this role of steward - surely we should welcome the presence of the person of the Holy Spirit within us, to empower us for our stewardship. Otherwise will not most of what we do be in the power of the flesh!

We should attend to walking in the Spirit on a daily basis. It is so easy just to plough on and do all the things that come before us - a little stopping for prayerful reflection would help us all to align our thoughts with the Holy Spirit for the work of each day.

True stewardship

True stewardship will please the master, true stewardship will bring us its reward.

Good intentions and hard work will count for nothing unless we are flowing with the Spirit of God in His purposes for our lives - be that purpose something large or something small, something attractive or something demanding.

CHAPTER 10

WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

'We are God's fellow workers if anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.' 1 Corinthians 3: 9 and 14

'Behold I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every one according to his work.' Revelation 21:12

'And His Lord said to him, Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.' Matthew 25:23

Enter into the joy of your Lord - what a wonderful future expectation. What a prospect - the Lord is coming, His reward is with Him and we can anticipate the fullness of joy.

I've made my choice.
I've made my decision.

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve....

'But for me and my house we will serve the Lord' Joshua 24:15

How about you?

It is a heart issue

We will finish by reminding ourselves that it is an issue of the heart. Jesus said, *'No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.'*

Matthew 6:24

If you find yourself trying to serve two masters here is the antidote,

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind,' because it is a love issue.

'Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus. Amen.'