

The Normal Christian - Faithful In Money Matters

What should be the attitude of a Christian to money matters?

For no Christian can avoid touching “*mammon*,” [money or wealth].

Matthew 6:24 [New King James] “*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.*”

Right at the outset we must understand that the love of money stands opposite to the love of God.

All Christians should therefore be alert lest they come under its power, for if it has any power in their lives God will not be able to use them to serve other human beings.

In the Old Testament the recorded life of Balaam is an illustration of the conflict between love of money and the work of a servant of God.

In **Revelation 2:14** we read of the influence of the teaching of Balaam on the members of the Church in Pergamos, also Jude refers to the “*error of Balaam*,” [**Jude 11**].

Balaam was a prophet who worked for reward, he commercialised the prophetic ministry.

Balak, King of Moab, was bent on destroying the people of God and he hired Balaam to curse them, but Balaam was **not** ignorant of the mind of God and he was well aware that the people of God were a blessed people.

Moreover, God had plainly told Balaam **not** to comply with Balak’s request.

But the reward being offered by Balak lured Balaam to try to persuade God to reverse His decision.

Balaam’s plan was carried into effect and was wonderfully successful, God actually granted Balaam permission to do the thing He had previously told Balaam not to do.

When God ultimately gave Balaam permission to go with the princes of Balak, it was not because He approved Balaam’s mission, nor was this the result of “*waiting on God*” as some people think.

God simply allowed Balaam to go his self-chosen way, [**Numbers 22:1-21**].

Balaam was a prophet, but he allowed the subtle influence of money to affect his serving the people which led him far astray.

Any Christian who has **not** settled the financial issue in their lives is bound to come under the sway of “*mammon*.”

Every true servant of God must be free from the bondage of money to be used by Jesus Christ in His work on earth.

This matter of seeking guidance of God, as Balaam did, when in fact we are really guided by gain, is a despicable thing.

If the God we serve is the loving Almighty God, can we not confidently do His bidding and leave our physical needs to Him? [Matthew 6:25-33]

2 Peter 2:12-17 [New King James] *“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”*

Peter refers to the “way of Balaam” in the context of false prophets and their depravity.

The root of this depravity is in the heart. When the habit of covetousness has been secretly developed in the heart, then the hand reaches out for reward and the feet begin to stray from the way of God.

This does not happen in a moment, and there is no outward indication of trouble at first, the inward departure from God is well cloaked beneath the outward form of seeking counsel of Him.

Numbers 22:8 [New King James] *“And he said to them, ‘Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me.’ So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.”*

How spiritual these words sound, but Balaam’s heart was *“trained in greed.”*

Balaam got what he wanted, but with an appalling result! The habit he was secretly cultivating developed into an open way, *“the way of Balaam.”*

Revelation 2:13 [New King James] *“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”*

Every Christian lives in a world that is influenced by Satan, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19].

Revelation 2:14 [New King James] *“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.”*

We see that there is not only a *“way of Balaam”* but also a *“teaching of Balaam,”* a heart that has harboured covetous thoughts does **not** accept correction, so the desire for gain has become a confirmed habit that soon expresses itself in an outward way, becoming more and more defined until it has developed into a formulated teaching.

Peter refers to false teachers in context with the *“way of Balaam.”*

Paul in his letter to Timothy also speaks of the perils of covetousness.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 [New King James] *“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”*

Note *“suppose godliness is a means of gain.”* **Could anything be more base than to engage in Christian work as a source of profit?**

Let us constantly shun the idea that “*godliness is a way of gain,*” in the form of wealth.

1 Timothy 6:6 [New King James] “*Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*”

The very opposite is true, the greatest gain is contentment with godliness.

1 Timothy 6:7-10 [New King James] “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,** for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*”

The basic attitude of Balaam is expanded in these verses.

Matthew 14:13-21 [New King James] “*When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*”

Through this miracle Jesus Christ demonstrated to His disciples that worldly wisdom must not prevail in His service. However meagre the resource we have on hand, we must be prepared to give and give.

People who are always swayed by financial restrictions in God’s work are servants of mammon, not servants of God.

The disciples did **not** learn this lesson all at once, so Jesus Christ brought them into a similar circumstance again, [**Matthew 15:32-39**].

At Pentecost the disciples were faced with crowds of people with spiritual hunger, but they had learned their lesson and reckoning with divine resource they ministered to 3,000 people and later as many as 5,000, [**Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4**].

2 Corinthians 11:7 [New King James] “*Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you **free of charge?***”

Paul did not take money for preaching the gospel message for at that time it would not have been in the interest of the gospel to do so.

Acts 20:33-34 [New King James] “*I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.*”

When speaking to the Ephesian elders, [verse 17] Paul reminded them that he worked to pay for his personal needs and of those with him.

What a burden was upon Paul to preach the gospel message, he could do no other, even if he had to work overtime at his trade so as not to make himself a burden on others.

Luke 6:38 [New King James] *“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.”*

This is a divine law and we violate it to our own hurt.

The way a Christian manages their financial affairs is on a basis that is diametrically opposite to that of non-Christians.

1 Peter 5:2 [New King James] *“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;”*

Peter’s direction to every church leader.

1 Timothy 3:8 [New King James] *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;”*

Paul’s reminder to Timothy of the qualifications of any person who seeks to serve their fellow Christians.

Covetousness is a trouble that calls for drastic dealings, and unless we solve this problem fundamentally any Christian can get into difficulties sooner or later.

Philippians 4:11-13 [New King James] *“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

Contentment is something we have to learn and with the help of the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus Christ we all can.