

Cheerful Giving

Have you ever wondered what might be the most subtle of faith killers? There are quite a few cunning sins that could fit the bill: lust, hypocrisy, anger, pride, and others. However, as a believer who has trusted Christ in simple faith, is desirous of His transformational work, and determined to carry out His mission, **this** subtle faith killer sneaks its way into our everyday routine in the form of a question: “But, what if ...?” It is this question that in spite of our redemption, sanctification, and commitment has the capacity to undermine our faith. What is this most subtle of faith killers? Worry. It is a state of anxiety over actual or potential problems in spite of God’s proven role as the Ultimate Keeper and Giver.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus informs His listeners of the danger of worry. Interestingly, the Lord Jesus connects the threat of worry to money and material possessions - material things we are all familiar with like our daily food and necessary clothing (Matt 6:24-25 ff):

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.** Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Jesus makes it crystal clear that whom we trust is our master, and that we can only choose one. Shockingly, He describes it as choosing love and devotion over hate and disdain. Woah! Let that sink in. If we are devoted to Jesus, we disdain stuff **OR** we are devoted to stuff and we disdain Jesus. There is no alternate option.

Yet, did you also notice the connection between worry and money/material goods? The everyday stuff, including but not confined to food and clothing, is not to worry us. Material stuff is not inherently evil or sinful, but there must be a distinction made between the “spiritual” stuff and the “material” stuff. Warren Wiersbe puts it this way, “It is not wrong to possess things, but it is wrong for things to possess you.” Sadly, we often find ourselves unaware of our misappropriation of God’s money and material goods. **We worry about the less significant material stuff rather than the priceless spiritual stuff.** Similar to Israel, when we are challenged regarding our devotion, we respond to God’s plea with surprise, even ignorance. Israel’s paraphrased reply to the Lord’s call for repentance shows its complete lack of self-awareness: “How can we return when we’re not even lost?” (Malachi 3:7).

In Malachi, God charged His people, Israel, with robbing Him by neglecting to offer the tithes and contributions that God deserved. Whatever the reason for their negligence, they were more concerned about meeting their needs than trusting God to meet them. Sadly, by failing to do so Israel not only robbed Him, but also robbed themselves and the surrounding nations. God challenges them with these words:

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need... Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:10, 12)

When we give as godly stewards, entrusting the Lord with our sacrificial gift, we give for a divine purpose, participating in sowing for a divine harvest, and certain of receiving a divine blessing. Remember, as the Ultimate Giver, God gives the Priceless Treasure, Jesus and “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). And that’s enough! So, give generously, cheerfully, gratefully, and graciously in order to benefit others and glorify the Divine Master and Owner of all. He is holy, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, righteous, glorious, infinite, eternal, immutable, sovereign, loving, gracious, good, just, merciful, faithful, compassionate, matchless, and so much more! He is worthy of our undivided heart!

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV) - “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 yourselves 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.***”