

Vision and Money

Sitting at the Feet of Yeshua

We continue exploring the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 6. Yeshua now continues with instructions on vision and money.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So if you have a 'good eye' [that is, if you are generous] your whole body will be full of light; but if you have an 'evil eye' [if you are stingy] your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23)

The idea behind this passage is one of childlike simplicity. The eye is regarded as the window by which the light gets into the whole body. The state of a window decides what light gets into a room. If the window is clear, clean and undistorted, the light will come flooding into the room, and will illuminate every corner of it. If the window is colored or frosted, distorted, dirty, or obscure, the light will be hindered, and the room will not be lit up. Yeshua says that the light, which gets into any man's heart and soul, depends on the spiritual state of the eye through which it has to pass.

The view we take of people depends on the kind of eye we have. There are certain obvious things, which can blind our eyes and distort our vision.

- **Prejudice can distort our vision.** There is nothing that destroys a man's judgment more than prejudice does.
- **Jealousy can distort our vision.** Many a marriage and many a friendship have been wrecked on the rock of jealousy.
- **Self-conceit can distort our vision.** Such vision renders us incapable of seeing ourselves as we really are. If a person is blind to everything except his own virtues, he will never be aware of his own faults.

So Yeshua is saying, *"There is nothing like generosity for giving you a clear and undistorted view of life and of people; and there is nothing like a grudging and ungenerous spirit for distorting your view of life and people."* We must be generous in our actions. It is when we begin to feel generous that we begin to see people and things clearly. It is then that our eye becomes full of light.

There are three great evils of the ungenerous spirit - of the stingy evil eye:

1. It makes it impossible to live with ourselves.
2. It makes it impossible to live with other people.
3. It makes it impossible to live with God.

The grudging eye distorts our vision; the generous eye alone sees clearly, for it alone sees what God sees.

"No one can be slave to two masters; for he will either hate the first and love the second, or scorn the second and be loyal to the first. You can't be a slave to both God and money." (Matthew 6:24)

No man can be a slave to two masters. Materialism can enslave the will. Either Yeshua is our Lord, or money is our lord. It is a matter of the will. Rabbi Sha'ul writes to Timothy, ***"those whose goal it is to be rich fall into temptation; they get trapped in many foolish and hurtful ambitions which plunge them into ruin and destruction."*** (1 Timothy 6:9) If God grants riches, and we use them for His glory, then riches are a blessing. But if we *will* to get rich, and live with that outlook, we will pay a great price for those riches.

To understand all that this verse means and implies, we must remember two things about the slave in the ancient world.

First, the slave in the eyes of the law was not a person but a thing. He had absolutely no rights of his own; his master could do with him absolutely as he liked. In the eyes of the law the slave was a living tool. His master could sell him, beat him, throw him out, and even kill him. His master possessed him as completely as he possessed any of his material possessions.

Second, in the ancient world a slave had literally no time, which was his own. Every moment of his life belonged to his master. Under modern conditions a man has certain hours of work, and outside these hours of work his time is his own. But it was far otherwise with the slave. The slave had literally no moment of time, which belonged to him. Every moment belonged to his owner and was at his owner's disposal.

This defines our relationship to the Father. In respect to God, we have no rights of our own; God must be the undisputed master of our lives. We can never ask, "What do I wish to do?" We must always ask, "What does God wish me to do?" We have no time that is our own. We cannot at times say, "I will do what God wishes me to do," and, at other times, say, "I will do what I like."

We do not get any time off from being a Believer; there is no time when we can relax our standards, as if we are off duty. Being a Believer is a fulltime job for life!! We never retire from being a Believer until we are taken home.

Yeshua goes on to say, ***"You cannot be slave to both God and money."*** This saying of Yeshua is bound to turn our thoughts to the place that material possessions should have in life. At the basis of Yeshua's teaching about possessions there are three great principles.

1. In the last analysis ***all things*** belong to God. Scripture makes that abundantly clear. ***"The earth is Adonai's, with all that is in it, the world and those who live there."*** (Psalm 24:1) We can buy and sell things; we can to some extent alter and rearrange things; but we cannot create things out of nothing. We can only make things from the material that God has created. The ultimate ownership of all things belongs to God. There is nothing in this world of which we can say, ***"This is mine."*** Of all things we can only say, ***"This belongs to God, and God is allowing me to use it."***
2. The second basic principle is that people are always more important than things. If possessions have to be acquired, if money has to be amassed, if wealth has to be accumulated at the expense of treating people as mere things, then all such riches are wrong.
3. The third principle is that wealth is always a subordinate good. The Bible does not say that, ***"Money is the root of all evil,"*** it says that ***"The love of money is the root of all the evils."*** (1Timothy 6:10) If we desire material things for an honorable independence, to help our family and to do something for our neighbor, that is good; but if we desire money simply to heap pleasure upon pleasure, and to add luxury, if wealth has become the thing we live for and live by, then wealth has ceased to be a subordinate good, and has usurped the place in life which only God should occupy.

One thing emerges from all this - the possession of wealth, money, material things is not a sin, but it is a grave responsibility.

Where is your wealth? Have you put your faith and trust in your material possessions? Or, have you laid up your wealth in heaven? Do you sow your seeds in fertile ground that will lead to a harvest of souls? Or, have you squandered what God has given you for your own pleasures?

We will not go wrong; if we use our possessions to see how much happiness we can bring to others. Rabbi Sha'ul remembered a saying of Yeshua, which everyone else had forgotten: ***"There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."*** (Acts 20:35). It is characteristic of God to give, and, if in our lives giving always ranks above receiving, we will correctly use what we possess; however much or however little it may be.

In my next post, we will continue to explore Matthew 6 by looking at what Yeshua says about worry.