

Who is Your Master?

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From the beginning of creation, God set boundaries for Adam and Eve and they understood that they were under God's authority. Adam and Eve answered directly to their heavenly Father and all other creation was under Adam's authority. Satan, by crafty, subtle suggestions and questions caused Eve to doubt the authority, goodness, and sovereignty of God. Words such as "you will not die", "you will be like God", "Did God tell you that?" were used as keys to open up Eve's mind to the possibility that God was withholding something "good" from her reach. She succumbed to the temptation and soon realized that she was the one who would suffer the consequences of her decision. The sad part of this process was that the consequence of the rebellion was passed on to others. Because of her decision, her husband and all of creation bore the consequences of the fall. They learned the hard way that God is all powerful, all sovereign, and his word will never pass away. What He declares in his word will come to pass and there is no authority or power that can prevail against his will. There is a portion of the Lord's Prayer that says "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

One of the most significant truths that a parent should instill into a child's mind at an early age is that he is an individual under authority. He was created by God and has a responsibility to obey God in all things. Ephesians 6:1-3 says "children are to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with promise that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth". A child that has been brought up to obey and honor his parents will not have difficulty submitting to the authority of other people and will also be likely to submit to the authority of God, his heavenly father. Children need to learn that they were created in the image of God and He has a right to rule over them. They need to be taught to respond in obedience to his commandments. Children need to know that living within the perimeters of the laws of God will bring glory to God and thus avoid being self-serving in their own world. Those who were not fortunate to learn these truths in their homes must gain the knowledge from God's word in order to be a person whose life is yielded to God in order that a fruitful life may be theirs.

The book of Proverbs is a great book for learning life's lessons. Look at Proverbs 13:13 on to the end of the chapter for it reveals these principles of godly living. "Sensible instruction is a life-giving fountain and helps you escape all deadly traps. Sound judgment is praised but people without good sense are on the way to disaster. If you have good sense you will act sensibly, but fools act like fools. Whoever delivers your message can make things better or worse for you. All who refuse correction will be poor and disgraced. All who accept correction will be praised. It is a good feeling to get what you want but only a stupid fool hates to turn from evil. Wise friends make you wise, but you hurt yourself by

going around fools. You are in for trouble if you sin, but you will be rewarded if you live right. If you obey God, you will have something to leave your grandchildren. If you don't obey God those who live right will get what you leave." Verse 24 says that if you love your children, you will correct them and those who live right will have plenty to eat, but those who don't live right will go away empty.

Adam and Eve moved outside of the covenant blessing when they disobeyed God. The Bible tells us to "obey those who have rule over us" Hebrews 13:17. We are accountable to each other for God put pastors and leaders in authority to watch over his flock and to look out for the souls of his people. Those in leadership must give account to God for the souls that are entrusted to their care. As the word of God is delivered to the people, they are responsible for studying it and applying it to their lives and instill the truth to their family unit. When a person's heart is tender towards God and there is a strong desire to please God, the task becomes easy and desirable.

There are many false teachers that have sprung up even in this last century desiring to change the meaning of the word of God to suit themselves. The Ten Commandments are treated as suggestions or completely ignored all together as irrelevant to modern day living. People twist the meanings, put Scriptures together that are not intended to be together, words are added and taken away to make room for everyone to enter the Kingdom of God. However, God's word will stand forever and we will answer to God for how we interpret and live out the commandments that are set before us in Scripture. Our hearts are searched by God's Holy Spirit and there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

Jeremiah 17:9 says "the heart is deceitful above all things and who can know it."

King David prayed that God would search his heart and see if there was any wicked way in him. Jesus knows our thoughts and the intents of our hearts perfectly, but we don't. The motives behind our actions, the words that we speak on a daily basis, the thoughts that we allow to linger in our minds all point to where our priorities and purposes are. The master of our soul is determined by the combination of these things.

The Scriptures instruct us to first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto us. Matthew 6:33.

When you search the word of God, you will learn that there are many examples of people who realized too late that they had followed their own desires and lost out in the end.

Achan, in Joshua 7:22, was called before Joshua for questioning when Israel lost a battle that should have been easily won. God had revealed to Joshua that Achan was the cause of the defeat for he had disobeyed the commandment that God had given to the army of Israel. Joshua spoke to Achan and told him that God had determined that he was the culprit that brought calamity onto the army of Israel. He asked Achan if that was true and if so, he needed to confess what he had done to bring this trouble to his people. Achan admitted that he was guilty of disobeying God's commandment and he owned up to the

fact that he had stolen a beautiful Babylonian garment, 200 pieces of silver, and a gold bar weighing the same as 50 pieces of gold, while the army was in Jericho. He wanted them for himself so he took them and hid them in a hole that he dug under his tent. Joshua sent some men to search for the items and when they had found them, they brought them to Joshua so the rest of the Israelites could see them. They took everything that Achan owned and his family and travelled to "Trouble Valley". Joshua told him that because he had caused the Israelites a great deal of trouble, now God would heap trouble onto him. Achan was stoned and his family died with him and everything he owned was burned and a pile of rocks was used to cover the area.

In 2 Kings 5:22, Elisha has sent Naaman away with materials to build an altar to the Lord in thanksgiving for being healed of leprosy. Elisha refused any gifts that Naaman offered and his servant Gehazi took note of it. He felt that Elisha should have taken the gifts that were offered to him so he chased after Naaman in order to get the gifts for himself.

When Naaman saw Gehazi coming, he stopped his chariot and asked him if everything was all right. Gehazi lied and said that his master had sent him to ask for some new clothes and 75 pounds of silver for two young prophets that had come from the hills of Ephraim and were asking for help. Naaman was generous and he gave him twice as much as he had asked for. He gave it all to Naaman and even had servants to carry them for him. When they arrived at the hill where Gehazi lived, he took the items from the two servants and carried them into his house and sent the servants away. After they were gone, he went to stand before Elisha who asked him where he had been. Gehazi lied and said he hadn't gone anywhere. Elisha told him that his spirit had gone with him when Naaman got out of his chariot and gave the items to Gehazi as he requested. He told him that because of his decision to lie and steal, he would suffer from leprosy and it would fall on his descendants forever. Immediately Gehazi's skin turned white with leprosy and he went out of the presence of Elisha.

The law of sowing and reaping is evident all through the Scriptures and no one is immune to the consequences of their actions. To follow Christ one must give up his own selfish desires and die out to his own carnal nature and carry his cross. God rewards those who serve him and are faithful servants. Temptation comes to everyone, but the Bible teaches that God will make a way of escape to those who desire to be obedient to God. The outcome for disobedience is always more than what a person would choose if he stopped and thought about the price of following his own selfish desires.

Think about Judas, Jesus Disciple, who betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Money was his god for he stole money from the treasury as he followed Jesus. He offered to comply with the chief priests and turn Jesus over to them for the price of a slave. Yet after the deed was done and he realized that Jesus had been sentenced to death and wouldn't be defending himself, Judas was sorry and could not handle the guilt. He went to the chief

priests and tried to return the 30 pieces of silver saying that he had sinned by betraying an innocent man. They told him that they were not concerned and that was his problem. He threw the money down in the temple and went and hung himself. Matthew 27:6-8.

Thank God that we have Jesus to cover our transgressions and bear our burdens for us. The Apostle Paul was extremely grateful for the revelation of who Jesus is for it changed his direction from a death sentence for eternity to a path that God appointed him to work to build up the kingdom of God. He no longer had to face the judgment of a sinner who fought against the Lord Jesus, but after his conversion, he suffered greatly for the calling of Apostleship that God placed on his life. At the end of his life, he made this announcement; "My life is like a drink offering being poured out on the altar. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course and I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Romans 6:23 says this: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The word tells us that we cannot serve two masters. We must choose just as Joshua announced to the Children of Israel. He told the Israelites to fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods that their fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve only the LORD.

He went on to tell them that if they wished to continue to serve the idols of their ancestors, then they could choose whom they would serve, but he made it clear that for his household and himself, he would serve the LORD.

The Bible tells us to lay aside every sin and weight that so easily trips us up and to run with patience the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1.

There are many people who try to hang on to their old way of life and somehow attach themselves to the goodness that is associated with Christian living. They oftentimes speak about God's work as though they were completely engaged in living a holy life, yet like Judas, their lives produce the works of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit. It will be revealed in due time as a person cannot hide what is in the heart forever. Satan is wise to the wickedness of the heart and the Bible says that those who will not love the truth will believe a lie and be deceived and be damned. See 2 Thessalonians 2:10. These people refused to believe and set straight paths for their feet that they might be saved. We choose the eternal destination and God has provided a sacrifice for he isn't willing that anyone perish but that all should receive eternal life. If you read the examples in this sermon today, the people who were punished chose to deliberately disobey clear instructions and therefore brought the punishment of God onto themselves. We can avoid the wrath of God by forsaking our sinful lifestyles and yielding ourselves to the master potter who will mold us and shape us after his own image of righteousness. Let us pray one for another.