

SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION

Matthew 6:24

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE TEXT

KJV—*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

NIV—*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

NASB—*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

ESV—*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.*

The Message—*You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both.*

III. BACKGROUND

A. HISTORICAL SITUATION

1. **Bond-servants** in ancient world

- Were permanent slaves
- Bound to master—by ownership
- Absolute obedience—to do whatever the master bids
- Were part of home and family

2. **Hierarchical Relationships**

- a. Everyone came under someone's authority—home and political
- b. Only the king/emperor was at top—but even he was accountable to gods, senate, people

3. **Lordship**

- Supreme position and authority over everyone in his sphere—home to kingdom
- Medieval example of 'liege homage'

B. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. Parallel text = Luke 16

1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ 3 The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.’ 5 And he summoned each one of his master’s debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6 And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ 7 Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ 8 And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. 9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. 10 “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? 12 And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

2. Explanation of context

- a. Here—Sermon on Mount text is used in context of parable of unrighteous servant
- b. Basic message = be faithful in little things—and you will be given more responsibility
- c. Secondary message =
 1. We are also responsible for earthly possessions/stewardship—not just spiritual
 2. So—Jesus is *not* against having contact with worldly mammon
 3. But we must know how to keep it in perspective with spiritual things

IV. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

NASB—*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

A. GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION

1. No one can serve
 - a. Combines two verbs—**δυναμαι** and **δουλεω**
 - b. Deeper meaning than on the surface
 - *Not*—‘no one serves’—not just statement of situation—or timeless truth

- *Not*—‘no one can serve’—not just statement of ability to carry it out
 - *But*—‘on one has the power to serve—we don’t even have the
2. Two ‘either-or’ pairs
- a. Hate—and—despise are parallel
 - b. Love—and—be devoted (hold to) are parallel
 - c. A-B-B-A construction
 - Hate—Love—Be Devoted—Despise

B. LANGUAGE

1. **SERVE**—four possibilities for meaning of **serve**

διακονεω = serve as **minister**

Domestic servant—as in stately English home

To wait on tables—to supply food

λατρευω = hired servant

A daily laborer—not lifetime service

To serve in worship (**liturgical**)

υπερετεω = serve in **office**

Literally—to row—be a rower

To serve as an official functionary—occupy an office

δουλεω = serve as **slave**—

Bondservant with permanent relationship

Member of the master’s household

Totally owned by master—under complete and permanent authority

2. **MASTER** = **κυριος**

Lord = one who is absolutely supreme

3. **HATE** and **DEPSISE**

a. **HATE** = **μισεω**

1. Primary—root word—meaning ‘detest’
2. Intense personal feelings against one perceived to be an enemy
3. Other usage

Mt 5:43—You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

3. Used of relationships and feelings about people—not about things or situations

b. **DESPISE** = **καταφρονεω**

1. To despise—think little of—have contempt for
2. Literally—to set one’s mind against someone
3. The opposite of being ‘lik-minded’
4. Example: working for a boss whom one does not respect
 - o Incompetence—lack of confidence in the person
 - o Immorality or dishonesty—no respect for behavior
 - o Conflicting values

3. **LOVE** and **BE DEVOTED**

a. **LOVE** = **αγαπω**

1. Deep and abiding personal love—as in godly love
2. Sacrificial love—giving of self—servants do this!
3. Not merely friendly or passionate love

b. **BE DEVOTED** = **αντεχω**

1. To ‘hold to’
2. To keep one directly in front of the eye—to cling to

4. **MONEY**

a. Word = **μαμωνας**

b. Meaning = mammon—treasure—wealth—riches personified as being against God

V. APPLICATION

A. ASSUMPTIONS

1. **Everyone serves someone** or something—everyone comes under some authority
2. That servant-hood is a **relationship**—expressed here in emotional language of ‘love’ and ‘hate’
3. We should desire to be in a **good situation** we like/love—loving the authority over us

B. BEING A ‘SERVANT’

1. Possibly four aspects
 - a. **Position** of servant—among those who tend to the household business
 - b. **Relationship** of servant—*under* master and *alongside* fellow bondservants
 - c. **Nature** of servant—to want to take care of needs of master/others—to be devoted
 - d. **Work** of servant—to *do* things for master/others
2. Two **central aspects** of this text
 - a. Assumptions: this is not begin with position and relationship
 1. This text is not talking about **status** or **position**
 2. It **is** possible to be in the **position** of a serving two institutions
 3. It **is** possible to come under the **authority** of two masters
 - b. The starting point has two emphases—the **nature** and **work** of servants
 1. The nature of a servant—to **want** to serve the master
 - It is impossible to be equally devoted to two masters—divided heart
 2. The work of a servant—to **so/fulfill** what the master wants
 - It is impossible to do equally well for two servants—not enough time and location
 3. Jesus also implies—if we **are** a servant—we should **act** like one—and **do** servant things

C. INSTINCTIVE NATURE AND BEHAVIOR

1. We are all wired—designed to serve something/someone—to be devoted
2. We are all wired—to have contempt for what we disrespect
3. So this is a compelling thing—inherent , instinctive part of our nature
 - **Example of magnet**

- o Its inherent nature—to repel or attract
- o It does not choose—to repel or attract
- o It is not wood—or stone—but magnetized metal!

4. So servant-hood is a natural thing—inherent in our nature

- Again—**everyone** serves someone/something
- The natural propensity is not a choice
- But **whom/what** we serve is where we exercise the choice

D. SERVING TWO MASTERS IS IMPOSSIBLE

1. Conflict of tasking—not enough time or presence to do all for two masters

2. Conflict of value systems—distract—confuse—make us ineffective in either realm

3. Contempt for one or the other—vs—contentment with one or the other

a. The world only brings contempt—eventually

b. God brings content—certainly

4. Seduction of the worldly master

a. Combines all these three conflicts

b. Bible warns us of the dangers—and tells us where

c. Content with the Master and what He gives—not striving with world intent on mastering us

Heb 13:5—*Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,”*

5. Inability to focus on two things/masters

a. We become schizophrenic

b. Or we become ineffective in both realms

Example: the human eye can focus only on one thing

E. THE CALL IS TO BE SINGLE-MINDEDLY DEVOTED

1. Begins with our **relationship** being restored

2. Moves to our **nature**—God remaking us into His servant

3. Then we take the **position** of servant—among God’s people in His kingdom

4. Finally results in what we do—we **work** for the Master

GOD'S REASON IS JEALOUS—FOR THOSE HE LOVES—WANTS ALL OF US