

Title: World War III – the battle for top spot
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The battle for top spot

Satan works on the assumption that every person has a price. Unfortunately that is often true.

Luke 16:13 (NKJV) ¹³ *"No servant 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."*

- Your and my struggle every day is not between serving God or the devil. It is choosing to serve God or to serve our stuff.
- **A Romanian pastor:** *"In my experience, 95 percent of the believers who face the test of persecution pass it, while 95 percent who face the test of prosperity fail it."*
- **John Steinbeck wrote to the Washington Post:** *"A strange species we are. We can stand anything God and nature can throw at us save only plenty. If I wanted to destroy a nation, I would give it too much, and I would have it on its knees, miserable, greedy, sick."*

Matthew 19:23 (NLT) ²³ *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."*

- **Question:** Are you a rich man?
- *So God asks us: "Are you going to serve stuff and have Me help you?"*
- **A wild beast:** Money may be temporarily under our control, but we must always regard it as a wild beast, with power to turn on us and others if we drop our guard.
- The fight for top spot has begun – God vs stuff

Two extremes – Materialism vs Ascetism

- **Two extreme philosophies** – materialism and ascetism. Martin Luther compares humanity to a drunkard who falls off his horse to the right, then gets back on and falls to the left. Ascetism is falling off to the one side and materialism to the other. Satan doesn't care which side we fall off, as long as we don't stay in the saddle.
- *Our Lord lived simply, but He was not an ascetic.*
- *Spirituality is a matter of the heart, not one's material circumstances.*
- *"Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority." John Calvin.*

Bringing money into the light

*"Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All through Scripture there is an **intimate correlation** between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money."* Richard Halverson

- Money is kept in the dark, just where Satan wants to keep it.
- **Real nature** – not simply what we say we believe, but it reveals what we truly believe.
- Simply follow the money for money will flow where our hearts are at.

"Jesus was never afraid to talk about money. If we were to teach about money as much as Jesus did, we would have to make it our topic every third Sunday. Why? Because Jesus knew that this issue of money and possessions has the power to consume and derail us more quickly than anything else." Nelson Searcy

Matthew 6:21 (NKJV) ²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

- **Your treasure?** That which is valuable to you. Our hearts are linked to what we value.

How materialism brings us to ruin

Definition: *"Materialism is being money-centred and thing-centred rather than God-centred."*

A materialist attaches the wrong price tags to the things of this world and the things of God.

***Everything material we have, including money, is either a tool or an idol.** If we fail to use it as a tool for God's intended purposes, it mutates into an idol.

- (1) Materialism prevents or destroys spiritual life
- (2) Materialism blinds us to the curses of wealth
- (3) Materialism brings us unhappiness and anxiety
- (4) Materialism ends in ultimate futility
- (5) Materialism spawns independence and self-sufficiency, which are deadly to faith
- (6) Materialism leads to pride and elitism
- (7) Materialism fosters immorality and the deterioration of the family
- (8) Materialism distract us from our central purpose

Materialism is a fruitless attempt to find meaning outside of God.

Jeremiah 2:11–13 (ESV) ¹¹ *Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. ¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

- Materialism is a dead end street – it is utterly self-destructive.

The morning watch

Colossians 2:6–7 (NLT) ⁶ *And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.* ⁷ *Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

- Let your roots grow down in him. Instead of our roots growing down into material things, we should let our roots grow down into God. He is our source of living waters.
- **The morning watch:** We can only get an eternal perspective by spending time with the Eternal One.
- **Practical:** Set time aside every morning and then put up your white flag. Surrender all you have to God every day. Just let it go and find peace and rest in Him.