

## FORGOTTEN TRUTH #2—WE ARE ALL SERVING!

### **INTRODUCTION:**

As the year 2018 wound down and 2019 got closer, I was struck by the thought that to many people, New Year's Day is just another day—and the new year is just another year. Although there is nothing spiritually significant about entering a new year, we need to realize that if we are not careful, we can become complacent and forget things.

One of the things we can forget is that we are constantly building on/working on/affecting our spiritual lives. In I Corinthians 3:10 Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. **But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**" We know from the context that Paul was not referring to building a **physical** house—he was referring to how we build our **spiritual** lives.

So, what does it mean to "take heed how we build?" And what goes into building our spiritual lives? There are obviously a number of things we could look at, but I felt led to focus on some "Big Picture" things we often forget. Last Sunday we looked at Forgotten Truth #1—We are sowing! Do we think about the fact that every waking hour we are either sowing to the flesh—our selfish, sinful nature—or we are sowing to the Spirit?

We have choices throughout the day—every day—to participate in actions and attitudes that will make us more sinful—or that will make us more spiritual. How can I make such a claim? Because Galatians 6:7 reminds us: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Verse 8 goes on to state that "if we sow to the flesh, we will of the flesh reap corruption—that which is unprofitable and worthless; but if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap that which accompanies life everlasting—the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23.

Forgotten Truth #1 is *We are sowing!* The question is—what are we sowing to: the flesh—or the Spirit? This morning we are going to look at another forgotten truth regarding the building of our spiritual lives. Take your Bibles and turn to Romans 6:15-19 (read). Notice again verse 16. In verse 16, we see Forgotten Truth #2—*We are Serving!* Again, whether you believe it or not—or think about it or not—everyone of us is, right now, is serving someone or something!

### **1. Masters we Could Serve**

God's Word indicates that we have choices regarding who or what we are going to serve. I'm sure there are more, but we are going to look at four. Please note that I am not attempting to list them in any particular order. The first we see is right here in Romans 6:17.

#### A. Sin (Rom 6:17)

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but..."

Paul is not thankful to God that they were the servants of sin—he is thankful that although they **had been** the servants of sin in the past, they were not anymore. What does it mean to serve sin?

It does **not** mean that someone "reports" to sin as one would report for work. It's not, 'Hey sin, I'm here—what do you want me to do today?' To serve sin means to be enslaved by it...to be trapped by it...to be under its bondage. It may start out as voluntary service—something we choose to do and enjoy doing—for a while. After all, Hebrews 11:25 reminds us that there is such a thing as "the pleasures of sin for a season." The reality, of course, is that the season of pleasure ends and we become trapped. Sin is our master and we cannot escape no matter how hard we try.

**Proverbs 5:22** “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.”

**II Peter 2:19** “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

Are there drunks that love their family and know they should spend money on their needs and not booze?

--Yes, but they are slaves to their alcohol.

Are there drug addicts that adore their wives and dote on them, but also steal from them because they must have drugs? Yes; because they are slaves to sin.

Are there men who love to look at magazines or pictures on a computer screen even though it makes them feel dirty and disgusting and want to stop, but they can't? Yes; because they are slaves to sin.

“Sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay!”

### B. Satan (Mt 4:8-10)

Does Satan want to be worshipped and served? He certainly does and tried to tempt Jesus to do that very thing! Can a person become a slave of Satan's? I believe a **person** can—but I do not believe a true **believer** can become a slave of Satan's.

**II Tim 2:24-26** “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup>In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

--This is talking about an unsaved person because they “oppose themselves”—they are against themselves

--They need to repent in order to be rescued from the snare of the devil

--They are taken captive by Satan at his will

Satan does not have that kind of power over the believer.

**I John 4:4** “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

### C. Substitutes (Ex 20:1-5)

Are there substitutes that we can love and serve in place of God or instead of God? There most certainly are—and the Ten Commandments remind us of that very thing!

**Exodus 20:3-5a** “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup>Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:...”

God's people were warned not to make graven images—idols—lest they bow down to them and serve them. He also told them to destroy the idols of the lands that they would be conquering:

**Exodus 23:24** “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.”

The worshipping of idols and false gods did not end in the OT, however. In Acts 17:16 we read of Paul's burden while on Mars Hill in the city of Athens “when he saw the whole city given to idolatry.” In I Thess 1, Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian believers because they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;” (v 9). **I Cor 10:14** “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” I find it interesting that the very last verse of I John is “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” (**I John 5:21**).

Think about that for a minute. John tells little children—a phrase he uses of believers that are new to the faith—to keep themselves from idols. Is he talking about statues? I don't think so. I say that for two reasons. 1) There are no other references in the book of 1 John about idols, nor are there any references to bowing down to graven images. 2) There are, however, numerous warnings not to love the world or sin.

An idol isn't just a statue, is it? An idol is anything in our life that can take over first place in our life—the spot that is reserved for God. The biggest battle in most Christians is not if we are going to serve sin...or Satan...or statues. The biggest battle for the Christian is this: are we going to serve God—or self?

#### D. Self (I John 2:15-17)

Does God warn us against serving ourselves? And what does serving ourselves look like? I believe our service to self shows up primarily in what it is that we desire and love. Please turn to I John 2:15-17.

What does it mean to love the world? Verse 16 tells us that it has to do with the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It is about fame and fortune; possessions and power; praise and pride. Paul lamented that Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world (II Tim 4:10).

John was not the only one who warned about loving the world—Jesus did too!

**Matthew 16:26**—“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

We can desire and seek after what the world values—like possessions, power, and praise—and “gain” them. We can acquire a lot of things—or achieve a prominent position—or gather a lot of fame, but none of them can save our soul and none of those things will matter in eternity.

You are serving someone—who are you serving? Not only is there a choice in who we serve, there is also a choice in **how** we serve.

### **2. The Manner in which we Serve**

Does God care about how we serve? He most certainly does; He is concerned about the manner in which we serve. We know that because He condemns certain types of service.

#### A. Insincerity in service (Mal 1:6-8)

##### **i. Statement regarding honor**

--Important to realize God is speaking here

--Matter-of-factly God states that the son honors his father and the servant his master.

God doesn't say a son should honor his father or a servant should honor his master—He says they **do!** It is a natural, normal, and right thing to do.

##### **ii. Question regarding their honor**

--v 6b “...if I then be a father, where is mine honour?”

--v 6b “...and if I be a master, where is my fear?”

In essence, God is saying ‘I'm both a father and a master—and I'm not getting any honor from you!’

##### **iii. Proof they weren't honoring God**

--v 7 “Ye offer polluted bread....”

--v 8 ‘You offer a blind sacrifice and a lame and sick sacrifice.’

In other words, you are keeping the best for yourself—and offering Me that which is not good enough **for you!** ‘Try offering what you are giving to me to your governor—would he be pleased; would he find it acceptable?’ They were robbing God—and keeping the best for themselves. God wants our best b/c He deserves our best! How sincere are you in your service to God? Do you give Him your best—or does He get your left overs?

--Do you honor Him with your time—or do you use it all on you and run out of time for Him?

--Do you honor Him with your money—or do you use it all on you and run out of money for Him?

--Do you honor Him with your talents—or do you use them for yourself—or not use them at all?

If we served our employer the same way we served God, would we still have a job?

Jesus warned against insincerity, too! Notice Matthew 6:1.

--In vs 1 we read: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them..."

--In vs 5, we are not to pray as hypocrites who love to pray to be standing in the synagogues and on the street corners "that they may be seen of men..."

--And in v 16 we are not to fast in such a way so that we "appear unto men to fast."

God is not against giving or praying or fasting—but He is when we do it for **show!**

God is not only against insincere service, He is also against indecisiveness in service.

#### B. Indecisiveness in service (Mt 6:24; I Kings 18:17-21)

Look at Jesus' words in Mt 6:24 "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."

What is mammon? Mammon is a word that means riches or wealth. Since money is an inanimate object and cannot tell us what to do, when we serve riches we are really serving **ourselves**.

Question for you—are you trying to prove Jesus wrong? 'Pastor, I would never do such a thing—how can you even say that?' I can say that because if you are trying to serve yourself and God at the same time, you are trying to do that which Jesus says can't be done!

One of the more familiar instances in the Bible regarding indecisiveness in service is the show-down between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Please **turn to** I Kings 17, beginning at verse 1.

--In I Kings 17:1 we learn of King Ahab, the wicked king of the northern tribe and Elijah, God's prophet.

There would not be rain except by the word of Elijah—who, of course, was God's spokesman.

--In I Kings 18:1 Elijah is instructed to "shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth."

--I K 18:17 King Ahab greets him as the one that "troubleth" Israel.

--18:18 'I'm not the troubler—but you are—because you have forsaken the true God.'

--18:19 Gather Israel together, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves.

--18:20 Everyone is gathered to Mount Carmel. Interesting that although Ahab thought Elijah was the problem, he listened to him and did what Elijah said!

--18:21 "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

A good question for us, isn't it? "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

God wants us to serve Him—not sin...or a substitute or our self.

God want us to serve Him sincerely and whole-heartedly, giving Him the best of what we have—and the best of our abilities—not the left-overs!

--And maybe, just maybe; God is speaking directly to you about your indecisiveness and is saying, 'How long are you going to wait to decide to serve God!'

Be like Joshua who said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). It's on plaques in some of our homes, but is it the attitude of our heart?

1. Are you serving God? If you are a child of God, that should be your heart-beat. Decide today to start putting Him first.
2. **How** are you serving God? Isn't it sad that we do things whole-heartedly for our employers and ourselves, but we won't for God?
3. I mentioned earlier that if we try to serve 2 masters at the same time, we are trying to prove Jesus wrong. There is another way that people try to prove Jesus wrong and that is in regards to how to get to heaven. There is one way to get to heaven—and His name is Jesus. If you are trying to get to heaven your own way, you are in essence trying to disprove the words of Jesus Himself. See John 14:6!