

## "The Lamp Of The Body Is The Eye"

"The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

These verses follow an exhortation and warning from Jesus. Exhortation, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"; warning, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth" (Matt. 6:19f). Dangers in laying up treasures on earth are apparent: such are temporary and subject to rust and decay. Further, there is the constant danger that thieves may break through and steal them for "riches are not forever" (Prov. 27:24).

Still, there is an even greater danger in riches than just the threat of moth, rust and thieves: there is the danger of focus. "Where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also" (Matt. 6:21). The young ruler of Matthew nineteen was good in so many ways! Jesus looked upon him and loved him. But Jesus also knew there was a critical flaw in his character and so instructed, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go sell that which thou hast, give to the poor and thou shall have treasures in heaven, and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). That was too much! When the young ruler heard this "he went away sorrowfully; for he was one that had great possessions" (Matt. 19:22). Then Jesus said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven and again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:23f). Mark's account makes the statement clearer: "how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mk. 10:24).

Paul also wrote a warning against riches. "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9f).

And so Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye." He shows that if the eye is single (healthy) the body will be full of light. But if the eye is evil, the whole body will be full of darkness. The "eye" stands for the heart and what it desires or intends. If our heart is pure, we will be pure. But if the heart is impure, the whole man is affected. In Psalms 10:8, the

eye may be set privately against the helpless: i.e., have no compassion for people in distress. In Psalms 15:4, he who would sojourn in the Lord's tabernacle is one in "whose eyes a reprobate is despised." Such an one looks upon the evil that men do and hates that evil heart which leads a man to wickedness. Such an one will have a "bountiful eye," sharing his blessings with others (Prov. 22:9)

From Solomon comes many warnings against an "evil eye." He warned that every man's way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 21:2)-Nearly all seek to justify themselves for some evil they do. In Proverbs 21:10, the wise man wrote: "The soul of the wicked desireth evil: His neighbor findeth no favor in his eyes." We would say that such is "looking for something to criticize." In Proverbs 23:33, the wise man warns that strong drink affects our desires, "Thy eye shall see strange things." In Ecclesiastes, 4:8 the writer writes of one who had sufficient for his needs but still "his eye would not be satisfied with riches," the riches he already had.

Solomon described the spirit of many. "Whatsoever mine eye desired, I kept not from them" (Eccl. 2:10). These "lay up for themselves treasures upon the earth." These have an evil eye and their whole body is full of darkness. Jesus warns, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). The words of an unknown man say it well: "Money is a good servant, but a hard master"!

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