

## **Essay from the bold pastor #220 - The Decline of Walmart -**

On January 15th, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc, the world's largest retail corporation, announced its plans to close 269 stores (154 of which are in the U.S.) and reduce the size of its staff by sixteen-thousand (ten-thousand in the U.S.). Its revenue in December was 0.1% lower than that of November's, and the annual revenue growth capped at 2.1%, compared to 3.9% in the previous year. The year-to-year growth rate was the lowest since the end of the recession in 2009, and combined with the accelerating shift of consumers toward online retail, symbolized the struggle of the retail industry overall. Their stocks for the day of the announcement traded at \$61.97, a 2% drop from the previous day and a 29% annual drop.

The small-format "Walmart Express" stores, their effort that started in 2011 as a way to compete with popular dollar stores, also has struggled too. 102 such stores are expected to close. Its online presence hasn't shown much growth either, while its competitor Amazon's market capitalization has surpassed that of Walmart's for the first time at \$70 billion in October. The stock market seems to be treating Walmart as having missed riding the wave of societal changes with its limited strength in only knowing how to operate large discount stores.

CEO Doug McMillon remained optimistic, commenting that the move is necessary and the corporation will continue to invest in the future, but some investors are expecting the coming of even more layoffs. Craig Johnson, the president of Customer Growth Partners (CGP), a retail consulting company, says that Walmart is falling behind. Walmart has closed many international locations previously, but its U.S. presence has only declined by a few stores annually at most in the past. From the Bible,

**"You turn people back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, you mortals.'  
A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch  
in the night. Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death - they are like the new  
grass of the morning. In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and  
withered."  
Psalm 90:3-6**

Such are the ups and downs of human life as seen from God. The doings of men and its results are unreliable at best. In Japan, stores like Uniqlo and Yamada Denki are also struggling. So instead of focusing solely on profits in the immediate future, broaden your perspective, and start fearing God who works in the eternal. Having done so, you will be guided for next steps as you live through this turbulent period of history.

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