

Matthew 6 Righteousness

Christ, in the former chapter, Jesus was arming His disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the scribes and Pharisees, especially in their expositions of the law. In this chapter, He warns them against their corrupt practices, against the two sins. These were hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness.

- **Matthew 6:1** *“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*
- What charitable deeds? Specifically the giving of alms to the poor and needy. E.g. money, food or clothing.
- Alms are basically any acts of kindness freely done by us for the relief of any that are in distress and misery.
- Which, when they are done, they are done from a principle of love to God and that he may be glorified. Truly good works, acts of religion, and acceptable to God and recognised by Him. **Read Acts 10:31.** This was an example of righteous deeds.
- Tzedakah in Hebrew meant both righteousness and the giving of alms.
- "Righteousness" means what is in harmony with the will of God, and righteous deeds are those that are pleasing to Him.
- **Matthew 6:2** *“Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*
- There is historic evidence that during this period, the Jewish priests blew trumpets in the Temple when they collected funds for some special need.
- Hypocrites! Who were these hypocrites? (**Read Matthew 23:3-5**)
- To be hypocritical is to be 'divided' in one's faithfulness to God.
- Hypocrisy, then, is a form of inner disagreement to God. It is honouring Him with the lips while the heart is far from him. **Matthew 15:7-8** *“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*
- It is making pronouncements about what is right while not practicing them; and appearing outwardly to be righteous while being inwardly full of lawlessness.

“Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” What was their reward? Lousy, flimsy, fleeting approval from men. But disapproval from God.

- ***3 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,***
- ***4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.***
- The idea of not letting the "left hand" know what the "right hand" does pictures secrecy. The way to avoid hypocrisy is to let no other people know when we give. Jesus' point was that we should not draw attention to ourselves when we give.
- Jesus warned His disciples about the possibility of doing good deeds for the wrong reason, as He began His teaching about righteous behaviour.
- If one does what God approves to obtain human approval, that one will not receive a reward for his good deed from God.
- Disciples should practice good works publicly (Matthew 5:16), but they should not draw special attention to them.
- ***Matthew 6:5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets.***
- Jesus was not opposed to prayer in public or public places, nor was He too concerned about posture while praying (sitting, standing or kneeling). His emphasis was on the motive of doing it in public places.
- He was again warning His disciples against ostentatious or showy worship.

Quote: "When a man begins to think more of how he is praying than of what he is praying, his prayer dies upon his lips."

- ***Matthew 6 verse 5 that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.***
- But those who do it merely for vain glory have their reward from men, and must expect none from God.
- ***Matthew 6:6 "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (with grace and mercy) openly.***
- Wherever we pray, we must cautiously remember that yielding in obedience to God's commands and giving Him His glory should and must be the main purpose of our prayer.

- Also, public versus private praying is a good test of one's motives; the person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he is more interested in human praise than in God's approval.
- **Matthew 6:7 "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."**
- **Do not use vain repetitions...**by repeat a thing often, to say the same thing in different words, or to repeat the same words, as though God did not hear at first. An example of this we have in 1Kings 18:26: **"They Called on Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us;"**
- Jesus Himself prayed long prayers (Luke 6:12), and He repeated Himself in prayer (Matthew 26:44). These practices were not the objects of His criticism. He was attacking the idea that the length of a prayer makes it effective.
- **8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."**
- If our father in heaven is the all-knowing one, the omniscient one, then why should we pray? We pray to our Father in heaven just like children speak to their parents: to share concerns, to have fellowship, to obtain help, and to express gratitude, among other reasons.
- **Matthew 6:9 "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven,**
- **Our Father...**indicating how connected we are to Him through the right His mercy gives us.
- It also shows how united we are and emphasises the importance of surrounding ourselves in brotherly love since we are from one spiritual family.
- Also the way we think about Him in prayer is very important. In prayer, we should remember that He is a loving Father who will respond as such to His children.
- Some modern individuals advocate thinking of God as our Mother. However, this runs contrary to what Jesus taught, and to the thousands of references to God that God has given us in the masculine gender—in both Testaments.
- God is not a sexual being. Nevertheless He is more like a father to us than a mother. Thinking of God as our Father will also remind us of our privileged access into His presence, and of our need to treat Him respectfully.
- **In heaven...**This reminds of His being above and beyond anything and also about His sovereignty. His supreme authority over everything.

- ***Hallowed be Your name.*** To know that God is God, to know what kind of a God He is, to be constantly aware of Him, and to be constantly obedient to Him—that is respect and awe, that is what we pray for when we pray: 'Hallowed be Your name.'"
- ***Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come.*** When His messianic kingdom comes, it will establish righteous rule here on earth. It is something every disciple must pray for and long for.
- ***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** His will being done on earth as it is in heaven will be fully established when His kingdom comes, however, because He is a just, righteous, kind, loving, patient ruler in heaven, we must continually pray that the same according to His will, will be done here on earth as well.
- ***Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread. Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.***
- ***13 And do not lead us into temptation;*** Jesus here is commanding His disciples to bring their personal needs to God.
- ***Some scholars say that The Lord's prayer from verse 11-13*** teaches us how to lay the present, the past and the future at the feet of God. Our daily bread representing bringing our present and daily needs in the presence of God, forgiveness which brings our past into the presence of God and helping us with temptation which commits the future into the presence of God.
- This portion of prayer represents our past, present and future bringing our whole lives to God. But it also brings God in His fullness to us.
- When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life.
- When we ask for *forgiveness*, that request immediately directs our thoughts to *God the Son*, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer.
- When we ask for help for future *temptation*, that request immediately directs our thought to *God the Holy Spirit*, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.
- ***Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts...*** Jesus viewed our sins as debts because we owe a penalty for them. A debt we could never pay except to be released from it by His forgiveness.
- ***As we forgive our debtors.*** Our forgiveness of others demonstrates our felt need of forgiveness. The person who does not forgive a brother's offenses

does not appreciate how much he himself needs forgiveness.

- Some Christians have wondered why we should ask for God's forgiveness, since the New Testament clearly reveals that God forgives all sins—past, present, and future—when He justifies us.
- We ask for forgiveness to restore personal fellowship with God when we have gone astray but we are not necessarily praying for forgiveness of sins to salvation.
- ***And lead us not into temptation...*** Temptation" is the Greek *peirasmos* and means "testing." Here it refers to trials that test the character more than being drawn towards evil. God does not test (*peirasmos*) anyone (***James 1:13-14***).
- Why then do we need to pray that He will not lead us into testing? Even though God is not the cause of our testing, He does permit us to experience temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil (***Matthew 4:1; Genesis 22:1***).
- Therefore, this prayer is a request that He would minimize the times of our testing that could result in our sinning. It shows the repentant disciple's honest weakness to stand up under severe trials, because of his sinfulness.
- ***But deliver us from the evil one.*** But (as an alternative) save us from Satan. ***For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.***

Prayer is straightforward and simple for those who have experienced the grace of the kingdom in Christ. In prayer the disciple does not try to coerce or manipulate God. There are no magical words or formulae, nor does an abundance of words count with God. Short, direct, and sincere prayers are adequate.