

Matthew 6:16-24 Righteousness Among Christ's Disciples

- Previously Jesus cautioned His disciples against hypocrisy, vain glory and ostentatious or showy worship through the giving of alms and prayer.
- **Matthew 6:16 ¶ "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance (appearance, expression of the face). For they disfigure (change the appearance of) their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**
- Fasting in Israel involved going without food to engage in a spiritual exercise, usually prayer, with greater concentration. It was a normal part of Christian self-discipline.
- It was also a form of self-humiliation before God normally accompanied by confession as seen in **Nehemiah 9:1-2**.
- People who felt anguish, danger, or desperation, gave up eating temporarily in order to present some special petition to the Lord in prayer (**Judges.20:26**)
- The Pharisees fasted twice a week (**Luke 18:12**). God only commanded the Israelites to fast on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31)
- Fasting lasted from dawn to sunset; outside that time normal meals could be eaten.
- **17 "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 "so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**
- Fasting emphasized the denial of the flesh, but the Pharisees were glorifying their flesh by drawing attention to themselves.
- Jesus' point in this verse was that His disciples should avoid drawing attention to themselves when they fasted.
- He pointed out that the hypocrites wanted the admiration of other people even more than they wanted God's attention. Since that is what they really wanted, that is all they would get.

- **Matthew 6:19** *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;*
- Jesus is addressing the disciples' lives in relation to wealth. He was telling them to break away from their former pursuits of amassing wealth.
- He was discouraging them from pursuing wealth as a life goal. Every treasure we accumulate on earth is perishable therefore your happiness cannot centre on it.
- Jesus is not against making money. Money on its own is not evil. A wise person works hard and saves for hard times. **Read Proverbs 6:6-11.**
- Believers have a responsibility to provide for their needy relatives (**1 Timothy 5:8**) and to be generous with others in need.
- **1 Timothy 6:17** *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*
- What Jesus forbade here was selfishness. Misers hoard more than they need (**James 5:2-3**).
- Materialists always want more.
- It is the *love* of money that is a root of all kinds of evil (**1 Timothy 6:10**).
- **20** *"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
- The treasures in heaven Jesus spoke of were the rewards God will give His faithful followers. They are the product of truly good works. These are secure in heaven, and God will give them to the faithful at His appointed time (**1 Peter 1:4**).
- **21** *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- The thing that a person values most highly ("treasure") inevitably occupies the centre of his or her heart.
- The heart is the centre of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will.
- **Matthew 6:22** *"The lamp of the body is the eye.*
- The eye enables the body go through life. The eye is the window by which the soul looks out to guide the body.
- **If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.**

- What Jesus stresses in this saying is that a good eye acts in a healthy way. It is the sign of a healthy soul.
- **23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!**
- A bad eye is a miserly, grudging, jealous eye (**Proverbs 28:22 a man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him**).
- Jesus was speaking metaphorically. He probably meant that the person who is stingy and selfish cannot really see where he is going but is morally and spiritually blind.
- Jesus was comparing the eyes to the heart. You see what your heart wants you to see. **Psalms 119:18 ¶ Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.**
- **Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters;** Where there is a master there is a slave. Meaning that we are all slaves to either God or Mammon. Mammon is got from the Aramaic word Mamona, meaning wealth or property. Wealth here being regarded as an evil influence or false object of worship and devotion. Medieval writers took it as the name of the devil of covetousness.
- Slavery here meaning that one of the two own us and we are of fulltime service to him. In the time of the New Testament a bondservant could refer at times to someone who voluntarily served others. In most cases, however, the term referred to a person in a permanent role of service.
- **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.** God and Mammon are not employers but slave owners. Each demands single-minded devotion. The point is; if you are materialistic, you will always be in constant conflict with God.