

The Right View on Giving and on Prayer

Matthew 6:1-15

Matthew 6:1-4 - "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. 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. 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."

Background Notes

In Matthew 5, 6, and 7 we have our Lord's well-known Sermon on the Mount. After giving the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-11, the Lord moved on to discuss the Mosaic Law in the rest of the chapter. The Lord emphasized that He had not come to abolish or destroy the Law given to Moses, but He had come to fulfill the Law.

Does this statement contradict Romans 10:4, which says, "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*" The Lord said he had not come to abolish the Law or remove the Law, but to fulfill it -- but then Romans 10:4 says that Christ is **the end of the Law!** Is that a contradiction? You know what the answer is, right? No, this is **not** a contradiction!

The point of Romans 10:4 is that Christ is the designed end of the Law, the purpose and goal of the Law, and the object to which the Law pointed. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the Law in that He kept the Law perfectly, and all the Messianic prophecies and promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The points of the Law that the Lord chose to discuss in Matthew 5 were all areas that the Jewish teachers of the Law, over the years, had deliberately misinterpreted and misapplied to meet their own selfish purposes. So when the Lord repeatedly said in Matthew 5, ""**You have heard that it was said**, but I **say** unto you..." He was not **replacing** that area of the law, but rather **correcting** the wrong interpretation that had been taught to the people. He stated what God had **originally intended** by these laws. So the Lord corrected the wrong teaching of the Pharisees concerning the law in Matthew 5.

In Matthew 6 the Lord denounced the incorrect practices of the self-righteous and hypocritical Pharisees. Two of these practices are mentioned in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount: the giving of alms and prayer. The Lord gave us the correct and proper view on these practices, and this teaching certainly applies to believers today.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should not flaunt their giving.

In verses 1-4 we see that the Pharisees loved to make a great show of giving their alms, of their giving to the poor and needy. These hypocrites would make sure that others knew **when** they were giving and **how much** they were giving -- whether it was to the collections in the synagogues or directly to the needy beggars on the street. In verse 12 the Lord said that they had their reward – they had the praise from the “media” and the “public” of that day and time!

That is not the way God’s people should give. Believers should not make a big show of their giving. Let me ask you -- do you flaunt your giving? (I hope you wouldn’t have to say, “Well, I don’t give....”) If you’re giving (and all believers should be giving!), do you flaunt your giving? Do you like people to know how much you give? Are you more inclined to give to a ministry project if you get your name on a published document or on a plaque on the wall, so that everyone in the church or ministry knows that you gave? Are you more inclined to give to something like that?

Believers should not flaunt their giving. If we do, we should not expect to receive a reward from the Lord! *“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.”*

When believers give, they should *“...not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing...”*(v3). What does this verse mean? Does it mean that we should reach into our wallets with our eyes closed, and give whatever we happen to pull out? No, that’s not what it means! I Corinthians 16 says we should set aside money for the Lord according to our income. Verse 3 is just a very descriptive figure of speech to teach us that we should give secretly or quietly, and not to gain the praise of men. (By the way, how would you know what to report to the IRS for income tax deduction purposes if you used the closed-eyes way for giving?!)

It’s impossible to hide our giving completely, especially if we give more than just a few token dollar bills into the collection plate. You do have to sign your name on a large check! But the point is -- don’t flaunt your giving! This applies to all areas of our giving (time, talent, and treasure) -- believers should not flaunt their giving.

2. Believers should not flaunt their praying.

Matthew 6:5-13 - *“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, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 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 openly.⁷ 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.*

⁸ “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ *Your kingdom come.*

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ *Give us this day our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts,*

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ *And do not lead us into temptation,*

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

In these verses we have “**The Lord’s Prayer**” -- the well known (but misnamed!) “Lord’s Prayer.” What do I mean by “misnamed”? It’s really “**The Disciple’s Prayer**,” since it is the prayer that the Lord gave for His disciples to pray. The Lord never prayed this prayer – we know the Lord didn’t have any debts that had to be forgiven (v12)!

Furthermore, this prayer was not given to the Church to be prayed repetitiously in services. As we have seen in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, this prayer was given to the disciples in view of the kingdom being at hand. We don’t read of this prayer being used by Christians in the Book of Acts. We don’t find any exhortation in the epistles for the Church to use this prayer in church gatherings or services. In fact, the Lord said to His disciples, “*Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full*” (John 16:24).

So “The Lord’s Prayer” was not meant to be a repetitious prayer for individual Christians, or for the church as a ritual prayer. The Lord gave this prayer as a **pattern for prayer**. Obviously it’s not wrong to pray this prayer, but it was not given for liturgical purposes in the church. However, it is a good **model** and pattern for praying, then and today.

“*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*” Prayer begins with the worship of God.

“*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” We acknowledge that God’s will is supreme and best, and we long for His kingdom to be set up on this earth.

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*” We depend of the Lord to meet our basic needs.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” This is not a request for salvation. It expresses a desire for our fellowship with the Lord be maintained by confession of sin. And we can’t expect forgiveness if we are unwilling to forgive others.

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” What’s the idea here? We know that God doesn’t lead anyone into temptation. James 1:13 says, *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”* So what’s the idea of praying “lead us not into temptation”? The idea is that we might be preserved and kept from the areas of temptation where we are vulnerable. “Lord, I know that I’m weak and I have problems resisting temptation. Lord, give me strength to overcome the power of sin and Satan.” That’s the idea in *“do not lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” This closing doxology to the Lord’s Prayer is not included in many of the ancient manuscripts, as you can see from the notes of most of your Bibles.

The “so-called” Lord’s Prayer is indeed a most wonderful **model for prayer**. Remember the context in which this model prayer was given. We should pray in secret to our heavenly Father: *“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 openly”(v6).* And by all means, we should not be like the Pharisees who loved to draw attention to themselves by their public prayers. By the way, verse 6 does not mean that believers should never pray in public! It is teaching us that we must not try to appear spiritual by praying in public, purposely where everyone can see us! Believers shouldn’t flaunt their praying.

Practical Application

Remember, forgiveness and fellowship go together.

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (v14-15).

As we mentioned back in verse 12, the context here is not the forgiveness of sins for our eternal salvation. No, it is forgiveness of sins so that constant fellowship with the Lord will be maintained. Let me ask you -- is it possible that you’re a Christian and you’re wondering why you don’t have close fellowship with the Lord? He seems so distant to you. Well, maybe you need to forgive a brother or sister for a wrong that they have done to you or something they’ve said about you. These verses tell us that if we are unwilling to forgive, the Lord will not forgive us and our fellowship with Him will be broken. No forgiveness = No fellowship. Remember, forgiveness and fellowship go together.