

## CHAPTER SIX

### SERMON ON THE MOUNT; PART TWO

#### Concerning alms and prayer

**Matt. 6:1 *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men so as to be noticed by them.***

We live in a very real legalistic society; our government has made laws for us to abide by and we have adopted this sense of obedience to these laws as a means of calling ourselves “good citizens.” The temptation we have is to carry over that sense of “good” into our churches and in a moral sense that we are good in the way that we do our life, but here in these upcoming verses we find a very different definition for good. “Good” is not so much defined according to what we do as much as who we are as a person; that is, concerning our character and disposition before God. In the true church the standard of good is not based on obeying laws and rules and acts of kindness as much as having a heart that seeks to glorify God. That is we seek to glorify God in what we desire, what we feel, in our affections, passions, and impulses. Jesus was opposed to the legalistic spirit of the scribes and Pharisees as they presented the Law of Moses and the Prophets; this legalism that they demonstrated on the outside did not necessarily characterize what they felt on the inside. Sometimes their conduct had a hidden agenda to appear as one thing while in their heart they had a deceptive mindset. He was also opposed to the pride that this “good” produced through its concern for outward show of obedience to these laws, **Matt. 6:1-6 *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be honored by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and Your Father who sees you in secret will repay you. And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners; in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*** The more we read the NT the more we realize that Jesus’ message was not just for Jesus’ time. Jesus obviously knew and continues to know the hearts of men and the spiritual issues of His time on earth may change in appearance, but inwardly they are the same today and they will be with mankind until the end of time. So let’s amplify these verses to get a full grasp of His teaching: *Be righteous just as you should be, that is, be careful not to practice showing mercy or giving to the poor in the presence of those with whom you are living, for the purpose of being seen by them; indeed, otherwise you have and hold no reward in the hereafter from your Father who is in heaven. So, accordingly do this, at the times when you show yourself*

*to be merciful by giving to the poor, do not metaphorically sound a trumpet to draw out attention to yourself in selfish conceit, just as the hypocrites continually do, trying to appear as showing mercy to the poor in their assemblies by their prayers and public reading of the OT, and also in the lanes of the streets, for they are giving in a manner that they hope may put them into an honorable position by those whom they live with. This I say to you and affirm this with truth. They have and hold their reward that I had reserved for them in the hereafter in full today. However, while you continue to show mercy and give to the poor, let your preference be to not let your acts of righteousness be known. Absolutely to the end that your having mercy on and giving to the poor that you may continually be of the nature where you do your giving anonymously, in a way that it cannot be seen by others; and then Your heavenly Father who absolutely discerns our acts of mercy where and when it cannot be seen by others shall, Himself, reward you publically in a way that makes you shine. And also so often as you do pray to the Father of all creation whether to obtain good or avert evil, pray in secret so that you are not being just as the ones who act pretentiously, like a counterfeit Christian; separate yourselves from a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character; because they desire to stand and pray to God in their assemblies that consists of prayers and the public reading of the OT, and on the corner of streets, in order that they might possibly make it apparent to their fellow men what they are doing and they desire to be seen superficially for who they are and what they are doing. I, who am the truth itself, tell you as a most certain and infallible truth, by receiving the applause of men now they have and hold their complete reward now. However, so often as you do pray to the Father of all creation whether to obtain good or avert evil, separate yourself by entering into your place of privacy where you cannot be easily seen, and shut your door, pray to the Father of all creation to obtain good and avert evil, who is in a secret place where no one can see Him, and when He sees you in your secret place He will recompense you publically.* Chapter five of the Sermon on the Mount deals with false teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees and the wrong conduct that resulted. In the first half of this chapter six, Jesus deals with four specific areas of practical righteousness in an individual's life: hypocrisy in charitable deeds, vs. 1-4; hypocrisy in prayer, vs. 5-15; and hypocrisy in fasting vs. 16-18 and lastly pretending to trust God and yet trusting money. The name "Father" is found ten times in these eighteen verses and this connotation is the key to understanding them. The word "Father" as it is used in these verses refers to the Father of Christians and pious persons who are referred to as children of God, thus when Jesus speaks to His disciples He calls God "your Father." He is a Father in the sense that He watches over His children with a paternal care and love always willing to provide for His children according to their needs, but not necessarily according to their wants. Practical deeds of righteousness should be done for His approval, not for people's approval.

He begins this portion of His sermon with a warning against the temptation to parade our piety by performing charitable deeds for the purpose of being seen by others. It is not the

deed that condemns this conduct but the motive. If public notice is the motivating factor then it is the only reward that they have to look forward to, for God will not reward hypocrisy. When Jesus says “beware of,” a literal translation of this phrase is “hold your mind toward this,” that is, do it constantly. “Righteousness” here is not a quality in us from which our acts flow, but something righteous that we ourselves do, something that God approves as righteous in distinction from imputed righteousness. The word *imputed* means to “be counted as,” to “reckon to” or “to put in his favor.” The righteousness that we do is to be better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, (5:20); it must grow out of faith and a regenerate heart and thus must be done unto God and not as a display before men. These righteous deeds are a result of our faith in Jesus Christ and the work that he has accomplished. The righteousness in the context of this verse is an act that could be seen as something that man gives to God to bring glory to Him; imputed righteousness is God giving to man as justifying man.

This is the point to which we must give heed. While men are to indeed see our good works, as a witness for Christ (***5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.***), these works are to be seen in such a way that men will glorify our Father in heaven and not to bring glory to us. The danger in this is that we might be doing them in front of men so that we will be observed by them and have the glory of men. It may flatter us when men praise us for our good deeds instead of giving all the praise to God for them. It is in our human nature to want to be admired by our peers so this diverting of the glory to God takes a supernatural transformation within our heart. If this is what is stimulating us to do good works we may be doing good and even great works even more to catch the eyes of men; ***Matthew 7:22, 23; Many will say unto Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me; you who practice lawlessness.*** So where this self-seeking motive is the stimulus that moves us, no matter how great the deeds may be, in God’s sight they have been completely ruined by our selfish desire for attention; in His judgment they cease to be righteous and in fact may be our attempting to take praise away from whom the praise was intended. He goes on to say that when we receive the applause from men for what we’ve accomplished we have no reward coming from God; this could be because we have taken something that rightfully does not belong to us. You wanted attention from men and you got it and what you wanted in the way of a reward you also received.

The text implies that when the deeds are righteous and done with the motive of glorifying God we will be rewarded. He who does his good works to be seen by men has the reward that he sought, that is, status among men. Deeds that are done as a display in front of our peers are, of course, not done to please the eye of God. They couldn’t possibly be done for Him because He rejects serving two masters, pretending on the one hand that we are seeking

His praise when we are secretly seeking only our own. Why would He reward such hypocrisy? Why would He reward persons who are trying to steal His glory? The matter comes down to making a choice of the rewarding coming from our Father in heaven or the transient, empty praise of men. When it comes down to that, we really only have one choice.

There was nothing more common with a Jew than to give alms to the poor and call it righteousness. And indeed giving to the poor and doing acts of mercy are righteous, which we should perform, and to withhold from the poor is indeed unrighteous. When we read about the “mammon of the unrighteous” it doesn’t mean mammon or money that was unrighteously gotten, but money that is unrighteously kept from the poor. **Luke 16:9; And I say to you, “Make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of the unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings.** That is, we should make use of money and other material things in such a way as to win souls for Christ and thus form friendships that will endure throughout eternity.

Giving alms was also to be called righteous because the Jews very much placed their justifying righteousness before God in their giving to the poor. So the giving of alms, to the poor by the Jews, was considered a sign of a righteous man. The temptation for them and for us is to be considered righteous as a means of acceptance in our local assemblies and as a means of getting a status of belonging in an elite group of givers. This is the righteousness of the Pharisees that Jesus teaches us that we must be above. The paradox of this kind of thinking is that we make ourselves above the scribes and Pharisees by remaining hidden as we give; we give anonymously. Thus the cause for Jesus’ warning to them and to us; we might gain acceptance and a sense of belonging, but we got what we came for in applause from men and there is no more reason to expect more from the Father. When a man’s self and not the glory of God is the chief end of any action, it can’t be called a good work in God’s eyes nor will it have any reward. Whereas a good work that is prompted by the principle of grace and is directed to the glory of God will have a reward, not of debt, but of grace, from whence it arises.

It seems incredible that hypocrites would noisily attract attention to themselves as they gave offerings in the synagogues or hand outs to beggars in the streets. The Lord dismissed their conduct with the terse comment, “they have their reward” (i.e., their only reward is the reputation they gain while on earth). Jesus expects us to give alms, that is, He expects us to give what we have to give to those who are doing without; here again we should not let our worldly covetousness decide what we are able to give or who is to be considered poor, but to the best of our true discernment we need to honestly consider if someone has a need that we can fulfill with what we have in whatever form of shape that might take. Anyone that obviously has less than we do is poorer than we are and we should be willing to give to them until that need is dispersed; not merely money, which sometimes is the easy way of fulfilling our obligations, but

also by our acts of mercy, or the really expensive gift of time. When Our Lord says “do not sound the trumpet” it obviously is figurative language because a trumpet is not allowed to be sounded in a synagogue, but it would be the same as saying “do not advertise your charity.” However the places He mentioned were to be taken literally, “in the synagogues and in the streets.” Their delight was to be glorified by men; that God was not glorified was not their concern. The warning to us today is to not publicize our acts of charity either as a group or personally in print form or verbally by pastors or by laymen. These acts should remain as anonymous as possible, both to protect the integrity of the person receiving the charity and the person giving.

Christ proceeds to give us some directions and cautions about giving of alms. They are to be done righteously, and are to serve a Godly purpose for the glory of God, the good of another and for the good of ourselves. So we don’t give our alms for the sake of receiving rewards alone, but to truly bless someone in need. When Jesus starts the second part of this verse by saying “truly, I say to you,” He is about ready to put His seal of authority on His judgment of our deeds. His verdict, “they have received their reward in full,” that is, they have received what they were after. Once again, we should be careful in our churches and the media that we do not get caught up in being as the scribes and Pharisees. Especially in our churches; our giving should be anonymous and not publicly announced for two reasons; first and foremost our giving is the business between only you and God, if the name of the giver is somehow revealed the giver should deflect all glory of it to God. Once the alms are let go out of our hands it should be out of our hands as far as the management of it and the result of our giving is concerned; we need to trust God in His sovereignty that He will take care of our alms and see to it that somehow it will meet its intended end, whether that end is to quicken their conscience or to supply a desperate need. It should also be anonymous for the benefit of the one receiving the benefit of our giving so that there is not a chance of a social stigma being attached to their name. By seeking the glory of men we lay impediments in the way of receiving honor from God.

When a follower of Christ does a charitable deed, it is to be done in secret. It should be so secret that Jesus told His disciples: “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Jesus uses this graphic figure of speech to show that our charitable deeds should be for the Father, and not to gain notoriety of the giver. The hands are usually so close together that, if they could see, each would know what the other is doing. When one hand does what even the other hand fails to see, that is, indeed, doing a thing in secret. Don’t even let the one who sits on your left side know what you are doing on your right side. This passage should not be interpreted to mean that if someone sees us being charitable that the deed goes into the worthless pile or the round file. It is virtually impossible to make all of one’s charity strictly anonymous. It simply means that the blatant display of giving is condemned. We should not

sound our trumpet, that part of our body that we use to make noise, to make sure someone is looking when we do our deeds of charity, or wait until we are surrounded by people to do them. The left hand represents myself just as the right hand does; the right me with my good deed; the left with my good opinion about my deed. If, then, the left does not even know what the right is doing, I should be absolutely free of desiring any praise or credit from men. The whole matter is in the heart, it is not a mechanical rule about hiding our gifts, because one might hide all of his giving in the secret hope of eventually being discovered and then being praised for the saintly secrecy of his gifts. Our heart will tell us that all of our good works are to be done for God alone so that we may glorify Him. We should look to Him alone for a reward of grace and not to men and their praises when our works are truly to glorify God. God is more than pleased to take advantage of every opportunity that we give Him to bestow His grace on us and we should be inclined to do the same to others. Once again I think this principle bears worth repeating; when we give, whether it be money or some other assistance, we must have the mindset that we are giving to God, the person receiving our gift is merely the means by which God has chosen to get our gift to where it is needed, so there is no need for us to follow up after our giving to make sure that what we gave was managed correctly, no one can manage our gifts better than God. We can be assured that when we give our gifts of charity our Lord takes them as His possession and the gifts then become His which He protects and sanctifies as His.

According to one Jewish historian the Temple provided a place where bashful benefactors might place their gifts to be distributed to the bashful poor, and the place in the temple was called "Silence." This provision was made so that not even the nearest and dearest friends that you are acquainted with would know of your contributions. In the Jewish canon it says that he that gives a gift to a friend out of love may make it known, but not if it is alms giving. The alms giving was supposed to be *done* in secret and *kept* in secret. There were two chambers in the sanctuary of the Temple; one was called the "chamber of secrets" and the other the "chamber of vessels." The chamber of secrets was that into which pious persons donated in secret and the poor children of good men were maintained privately. The Jews say many things in favor of doing alms privately. Greater, they say, is he that gives alms in secret than Moses our master.

This was the practice of the ancient religious Jews, to give their alms privately, but the scribes and the Pharisees had brought that practice into abuse. This is what our Lord is laboring in these verses to restore. He adds for encouragement "and Thy Father who sees in secret," He beholds all secret actions and knows the secret motivations of actions; "He will reward you openly." Our flesh will always attempt to make us look good in front of other people, but we must resist this temptation and if we do God will give us our recognition in public. The recognition that we so desired in our flesh at the time of our giving will be also accomplished in

front of an even greater crowd when we continue to receive it in heaven. In that great day of accountability, before angels and men, when all secret things will be brought into the light, then every saint will have the recognition of God that has been made righteous by His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

This duty, of giving alms to the poor, is mentioned by Christ, to be done before our prayer to God and it might be for this reason because it was usual for the Jews to give alms before prayer. The great or famous men, among the wise men, used to give a small piece of money to a poor man before every prayer and he did not commence praying until this act was completed. It was said by the Jews, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness” is spoken by God concerning these men.

The word “and” parallels the exercise of prayer with that of alms giving. God expects us to be praying regularly and Jesus takes our necessity of prayer for granted, this is not an issue for Jesus. Jesus warns His disciples against hypocrisy when they pray. They should not position themselves in public areas for the sole purpose of being so that others will see them praying and be impressed by their piety. If the love of prominence is the only motive in prayer, then, Jesus declares, the prominence gained is the only reward. Wherever there were ten Israelites a house was to be provided in which they may go to prayer at every time of prayer and these places were called synagogues. They thought their prayers were only heard there, therefore they chose to go to a synagogue to pray. It was also common to pray in the streets, though such places were not reckoned as holy as the synagogues were. The street of a city had no holiness in it because it was supposedly only by accident that they were in a street during prayer time. Therefore streets were only used in case of necessity, or by such Pharisees who chose to be seen by men.

It should be understood that neither their posture nor places of prayer are being condemned by the Lord, but in their view in all that their motive is to be seen by men. A crowd of men can be easily impressed by words that come out of our mouth and sometimes we can be so arrogant as to believe that Jesus Christ Himself is in this crowd, but Jesus Christ is not impressed by performances or acts put on to gain status among men. Jesus Christ warns us about what comes out of our mouth, ***Matt. 12:34-37; You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned. Matt. 15:11; Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. Matt. 15:18-; but the things that proceed out of the mouth comes from the heart, and those defile***

**man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, and slanders. These are the things that defile the man;** The emphasis is not on the Jews standing to pray, because standing was a very common and acceptable way for the Jews to pray, but it was on the places that they chose to stand. These were as public as possible, “in the synagogues” where many worshippers would see these scribes and Pharisees and “on the corners of the wide streets,” where many people passed in all four directions. These devout Pharisees pretended that they were accidentally caught at such a frequented corner by the hour of prayer and then would not let the public deter them from showing their piety, but turned toward Jerusalem or toward the Temple and made their prayers. Their pretense must have been transparent enough, but their hypocrisy was not ashamed to go to this length.

Their purpose was “in order to make a display before men” or “to shine” to men. In all prayer the inner motive and the attitude of the heart are the decisive things. These hypocrites did not really pray; they only imitated prayer. Because prayer is so high and holy, the devil likes to ruin it in many ways, and he certainly succeeds in the case of the hypocrites. How could Jesus be present with such prayers, when we ourselves are not present with them? Also the condemning word in these verses is the emphasis that is placed on the word “love.” They “loved” standing in prayer, rather than any other posture, because they could be seen better by men. And they “loved” to be in the synagogues and streets rather than in their secret closets. They “loved” public better than private prayer because it gained them applause from men. They have accomplished all that they desired from their “prayers,” but applause from men is all that they will get; how shallow when compared to the reward they could’ve gained! If we apply this warning to ourselves, I know for myself, there was a time when I would not pray in a crowd because I had not yet acquired the art of praying with impressive words. As I look back, if this was my reasoning it was better for me to stay silent. Our prayer should be spoken to God alone and we cannot impress God with our words. Probably the worst thing that we can do, concerning our prayer life, is to compare our prayer to how someone else prays. If we find it difficult to express in words what we feel in our heart that is no reason to worry or cause to be concerned. The Holy Spirit knows our heart and does not use grammar check to make sure our prayer is appropriate. Our heartfelt motive is the only prayer that is important to God.

In verses five and seven the Greek pronoun that translates to “you” is plural. But in this verse, verse six, in order to emphasize private communion with God, “you” switches to singular. The key to answered prayer is to do it in secret, that is, go into your private place and shut the door. If our real motive is to get through to God, He will hear our prayer and answer it. Our secret place is a place where we don’t have to hide our emotions, worry about what other people are thinking when they hear our prayer, the words we use, etc. We can completely be ourselves and not have to put on our piety costume before God.



When Jesus tells His disciples to do their praying in a secret place our Lord does not mean to exclude or condemn public prayer, that is, in joining with a few or more persons in a prayer service. He actually directs us to do so and approves of such prayer, ***Matt. 18: 19, 20; Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.*** The book of Acts, which tells us a lot about the early church, is filled with verses about the disciples coming together for prayer. But from Jesus' point of view, He is instructing us to pray in private as well as in public, but especially in private, which is more suitable and fitting for this particular case and less liable to promote pride, hypocrisy and vanity. The point is not *where* we pray, but *why* we pray. He instructs us to pray to the Father who is in secret, who is invisible, not to be seen with the fleshly eyes of our body that are tainted with sin and would give us a distorted view of God. But He is to be approached with a true heart in faith and reverence, through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only mediator between God and man. Jesus Christ is the true image of the invisible God and in whom He is well pleased to manifest Himself to His people. Our God, who is in this secret place, will take notice of our secret requests and desires of our heart and lips, both in the present and in the hereafter. In our alone time of prayer the Jews say that a man ought not to be heard in prayer, but should pray silently, this is the prayer that is accepted daily.

The prayer in secret is emphasized in this verse as a contrast with the way the hypocrites pray. The contrast is here not with regard to public prayer in the congregation, but only with regard to personal prayer made for the purpose of display before men. Jesus Himself called the Temple the "House of Prayer" where public prayer was made. He even took part with all of the people in the worship in the synagogue. The disciples, whom He is now teaching, saw Him praying and heard Him praying.

To shut the door of one's own room means to pray in complete privacy. All intrusion is barred out; the worshipper at this time is alone with God. True praying must start in secret since by its very nature it is a personal communion of our spirit with God and an attitude of prayer and any words of prayer that are not intended for God, but are said to impress men, are the worst type of prostitution of prayer. Another added value to private prayer is that it will aid in our worship during our worship services, where an adjustment of attitude and values may be necessary. There should be a correspondence while we are praying in secret, if we have a patient heart to wait and listen for the response. God never intended prayer to be a monologue one way or the other. This, I would personally consider as the repayment, or at least a part of the repayment that He mentions in verse six when He says "Your Father who sees you in secret will repay you." When we have the option of hearing the applause from men or hearing directly from the God of the universe, the choice is really no choice at all. The applause of men is only but for the brief moment, the consent of God lasts into eternity.

The direction that Jesus wanted to take His disciples in this Sermon was to change their hearts rather than their behaviors. So does this mean that Jesus had no problem with the behaviors that He saw in the so-called spiritual people of His day? No, but He knew that if people would change their hearts their behaviors would follow. One way to change their hearts was to instruct them as to how to pray appropriately, **Matt. 6:7-15; And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then in this way: Our Father who art in heaven (or, in the heavens), hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver from evil (or, the evil one). (For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen). For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.** The last thing that we want to do is envision our Father closing His ears as we pray because of an inappropriate prayer on the one hand, on the other we do not want to make prayer a legalistic performance. Our Father in heaven is not impressed by performances, no matter what kind of reviews mankind gives them. Jesus was teaching against such prayers in this part of the sermon. Praying appropriately also does not mean that we memorize these words that He spoke and limit ourselves to this form of prayer, this would be “meaningless repetitions” that He teaches against in verse 7. So let’s take this verse apart to get a better grasp on what is appropriate when we pray: *And also when you are praying to God for the obtaining of good or the averting of evil, do not use much talking without content, repeating the same things over and over again, useless speaking without distinct expression of purpose as contrasted with succinct, knowledgeable speech; so don’t choose to use foolish speaking or indiscreet vowing, as those who are not connected with the people of the God of salvation do; because they are of the opinion that their prayers will be heard favorably because of their grandiose speaking. Therefore do not act like them in the external form of your conduct and character; because your God, the Father as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all men and things, the One who watches over you with a paternal love and care, has absolute knowledge of whatever you personally need or want even before you take the action to pray to Him for it. Pray in this fashion to your Father then, My father, the One being that resides in the heavens, the One whose attributes, relations, and manifestations I emphatically venerate and regard as holy. To You I pray that Your kingdom will be as expressed in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and as embodied in the visible church and in the universal spread of the gospel, and as it continues to be established. I pray also for Your counsel and that Your eternal purposes will be fulfilled, on earth as fully as it is in heaven. My desire is that You will be the author or source of what I receive, what is granted to me, what is given to me, and what is imparted to me, that which suffices for this particular day and as my*

*needful substance and sustenance for my body for the coming days. And in addition, I pray that You will let go from Your power and possession, let go free, let escape, the penalty for my sins, pardon me and forgive me of my offenses and faults that require reparation, as I likewise, have let go from my power and possession, let go free, and let go from the penalty of anyone who has failed to perform their duty toward me, to them I give a pardon and forgive them of their offenses and faults. And in addition I pray do not bring me into a state or condition of trial in which You bring me through adversity and affliction in order to encourage and prove my faith and confidence in You, but rather draw me to You and snatch me from danger; rescue and deliver me from the false accuser, the malevolent, malignant, wicked one. Because Yours is the dominion, reign and the exercise of kingly power and the omnipotent sovereignty that is due You and we ascribe to You as being the author and procurer of that which honor is ascribed and as One who is in an exalted state of blissful perfection that will be shared with those who dwell in heaven, in time without end. So be it! Because if you are in a position to let go from your power or possession and follow through to let go and let escape from retribution anyone for their errors, mistakes, faults, weaknesses, and wrong doings that have been willfully perpetrated against you, your heavenly Father will also let go and let escape retribution your errors, mistakes, faults, weaknesses, and wrong doings that you perpetrated toward Him. However, if you are in a position of uncertainty in making a decision and decide not to let go from your power or possession, neither to let go and let escape from retribution anyone for their errors, mistakes, faults, weaknesses, and wrong doings willfully perpetrated against you, then neither will your Father who is the supreme and personal judge of your attitude toward Him, anymore, for He presents Himself as the standard whereby we must judge ourselves, His judgment for you will be to not let go from His power or possession to let go and let escape from retribution your errors, mistakes, faults, weaknesses, and wrong doings. As we consider what our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us here in these verses we need to remember that praying is our line of communication with God. If we are “praying” in public, at a worship service or any other gathering of Christians, attempting to use impressive Christian words or phrases, or we concern ourselves with what others are thinking about how we our praying, all in an attempt to get applause from men or to gain acceptance from men, is it a prayer? Not in my opinion or by Biblical definition; it isn’t any more than ordinary conversation between two or more people, one may even be trying to “out pray” the other. God closes His ears and turns away from these utterances and they have no affect on whatever it is we were praying for. Now, is there a standard of appropriateness that should be used in prayer; yes, everything that we do before God should be done with appropriateness and Jesus will elaborate on this as we continue. Prayer should not consist of vain repetitions, i.e., stock sentences or empty phrases. Unsaved people pray like that, but God is not impressed by the mere multiplication of many words. Once again He is only concerned with our heart and He wants to hear our sincere expressions from the heart. The hypocrisy that was mentioned in the previous verses that made a display of*

prayers is also inclined toward wordiness in prayers. The word used in the Greek for “meaningless repetitions” is literally translated to mean “stammering,” but Jesus’ point here has nothing to do with stammering, but has a closer understanding of “to babble;” It means “to use a lot of useless and superfluous words. Saying the same things over and over again is what the worshippers of Baal do from morning until noon, **1 Kings 18:26; Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal answer us.” But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar (doing a ceremonial dance) which they made.**

Mere formulas were repeated over and over again and it wasn’t just among the Gentiles, the Jews also had such prayer formulas, and today we see Catholics have them in the form of “the Rosary.” It is heathen folly to measure prayer by the yard. The folly of this procedure is the fact that such people think that they will be heard merely for their great volume of their words, even if it is thoughtless babble. Even undue length warps prayers, a truth which many to this day fail to understand, thinking that long prayers spoken with a pious tone is a mark of true spirituality. This was a problem for the Jews of Jesus’ day; if it wasn’t He wouldn’t have taken the time to address it in a sermon. The Jews believed that every man that multiplies his prayers is heard and whoever prolongs his prayer, his prayer does not return empty. They also taught that whoever was long in prayer, his life would be prolonged. Their canon told them that each man should pray a minimum of eighteen times a day. Nothing in this attitude up to this point is bad or evil, but their prayer books were abound in redundancies and verbosity, expressing the same things using different words and multiplying the ones they used. Obviously these are not effective prayers and they have no Scriptural support.

Since our Father knows the things that we have need of, even before we ask Him, then is it unreasonable to ask? Why should we even pray if He already knows what we will pray for? The reason is that, in prayer, we acknowledge our need and dependence on Him. It is the basis of our communicating with God. His admonition to us is this then, “do not be like them;” Jesus felt there was a danger of the scribes and Pharisees as being their model for prayer. Instead of letting the wrong example of others mislead us, such an example should be a warning to us. Another consideration is brought in when He teaches us that the Father knows our needs even before we ask. To talk and to act as though we had to inform Him of everything and as though by omitting some detail He would be left in ignorance, is to debase God and thus insult Him. Have we forgotten that He is omniscient? The opposite error is that, since God knows all of our needs and is ever ready to help us, prayer is unnecessary, except to relieve our hearts and make us more comfortable. Prayer is more than an auto-suggestive process to secure a psychological effect. If He knows our needs and wants before we ask then there is no need for long prayers. I understand that the term “long” is a relative term; what is considered long by one person is not necessarily long for another, but this is should not be the focal point of

importance for those hearing prayers and for those doing the praying. When it comes to *need* for prayer the onus is on us; God does not need our prayers, but we need to pray to God.

In verses 9-13 we have what we have what is very familiarly referred to as “the Lord’s Prayer.” In using this title, however, we should remember that Jesus Himself never prayed it. It was given to His disciples as a pattern after which they could model their prayers. It was not given as the exact words they were to use, (v-7), because many words repeated by routine memory can become empty phrases. He gives them an illustration of the right manner of prayer, one that is right in form, content and spirit in contrast to what the scribes and Pharisees prayed.

*“Our Father who art in heaven”*... Prayers should be addressed to God the Father as an acknowledgement of His sovereignty over the universe. Personally I like to pray these words in the first person singular, which makes it more personal to me. Only a true child of God can address Him as Father and only faith in Christ makes one a child of God. The word “our” presupposes the possession of faith, it is comparable to the OT phrase “the Lord our God.” Even though I like praying this prayer in the first person singular it is always appropriate to include all of God’s children in our prayers, by saying the word “our.” By making “my” plural we have indicated that He is also the Father of all Christians. It was a rule with the Jews that a man ought to always join himself in prayer with the church. The object of our prayer is further described by the place that is our Father’s residence, in heaven. Not that He is excluded from any other place, but that heaven is the place where He most eminently displays His glory in purity and holiness in contrast to the corruption of sin that dominates this earth. We are making the statement that the one avenue to the Father and to His blessings is through faith in Christ and also that the earth is not our native country, but heaven is, and this where our Father dwells.

*“Hallowed be Thy name”*...His name is that by which He makes Himself known to us, His revelation to us. God’s Word is His complete name, made known to us so that we may know God and enter into communion with Him. In every passage of Scripture God looks to us and we must see Him there. His name, His will, and His kingdom are His. His name is not a mere sound, concept, or thought revealed to us; it is God Himself that is revealed to us. His kingdom is not merely a mass of His subjects, but His kingly authority, dominion, power, and rule as revealed in all of His subjects. His will is not just a mere statement of what He wants but it is His action of willing and accomplishing His will. We should begin our prayers with worship, ascribing praise and honor to Him who is so worthy of it. His name should be hallowed by Christians or sanctified by us before the eyes of all the living; letting His name be magnified and sanctified often and it should be done appropriately and often in the world that He created according to His will. His name should be sanctified as it is in heaven. The name Father and all of the other

names that have been ascribed to Him point to the perfection of His nature. By sanctifying His name we mean that we acknowledge and declare Him to be holy and we glorify Him in all of His perfections in His works. He is sanctified by Himself, declaring Himself to be holy by implanting grace and holiness in the hearts of His people and restoring the purity of His worship. He is sanctified by others when they reverence Him, believe in Him, and call upon His name in reverence, submitting to His will, and by acknowledging His mercies.

Many do not receive God's revelation of Himself nor do they revere and honor it as they should; even though God is constantly revealing Himself to all of us. Even God's children, at times, fall short in many respects. When we "hallow" or "sanctify" His name we set Him apart from everything that is common and profane. We esteem, prize, honor, reverence, and adore Him as being infinitely blessed. The opposite would be to profane His name, to treat His Word as not being divine, to neglect or change or contradict it by our words or deeds. The words "be hallowed" calls on God to make His word and revelation in Christ Jesus supreme in the hearts of man.

*"Your kingdom come"...* After worship we should pray for the advancement of God's cause, putting His interests first. Specifically, we should pray for the day when our Savior-God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will set up His kingdom on earth and reign in holy righteousness. This kingdom is the heavenly reign and rule of God through Christ in the gospel of grace. Where Christ is, there His kingdom and rule abides and of course also with Him are those who participate in the blessings of this rule and kingdom in their hearts, as kings and priests of God. We pray to have His kingdom come actually and completely, the consummation of all things created, the kingdom of His glory, **1 Cor. 15:24-28; then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all of His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.** His kingdom that is coming also includes the defeat of the kingdom of that wicked Pharaoh, Satan, pictured in the escape of Israel from the Red Sea and in the drowning of those pursuing them. This part of Jesus' prayer was an expression used by the ancient Jews before the coming of Christ. This expression said "the kingdom of the Messiah come;" Christ altered their prayer by leaving out the word Messiah. He shortened it to "Thy kingdom come" to let them know that the Messiah had come. And this kingdom that we now pray for is the kingdom of the Father, in the power of His grace, upon the hearts of men.

“Your will be done”... in this petition we acknowledge God’s sovereignty and that God knows what is best for all situations and conditions on earth and in heaven and we surrender our will to His. We voluntarily allow Him to dictate the terms of our living and life itself. It’s also a longing to see His will accomplished throughout the world. In this petition we set aside our selfish wants, our thoughts of wisdom, our understandings, and our knowledge to allow His will to accomplish its end. We trust in the results that come about in every situation as being a part of His perfect plan and we subject ourselves to His perfect plan that is trustworthy. We have a clear understanding that there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God, **Rom. 13:1; Let every person be in subjection to government authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.** Sometimes this is hard for us to accept when our man that we voted for is not elected to a political position, but we must remember that we have a limited vision of the future plans of God while God can see infinitely further ahead of our sight. God also knows the outcome that would’ve been experienced by each candidate and how His plan of fulfillment could be best accomplished. It would better for us to try to look ahead to our final destination, as God does, and to realize that this may be the best and quickest means of accomplishing that end.

In this attitude of prayer we are praying for God’s good and gracious will, **John 6:40; For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; And I Myself will raise Him up on the last day.** The thought is not that God has more than one will at work, but that the highest aims and purposes of His one will, regarding us, centers in His grace. That will centers in Christ who came to do His Father’s will and does carry it out to completion. If no opposition interfered with God’s will, a prayer such as this one would not be needed. But there is an undercurrent of hostility in the devil, the world, and our flesh and that is implied in the prayer that is trying to keep us from attaining God’s desired end for us.

There is still a part of this prayer that was included in the prayers of the Jews at that time in what they refer to as “the short prayer.” This prayer says “do Thy will in heaven, and give quietness of spirit, or acquiescence of spirit to Thy will to them that fear Thee below.” Christ teaches us that we ought to do His will, not the will of wicked men, nor the will of Satan, or a man’s own will, but the will of God. This includes His secret will, which is the will of all of His proceedings both in providence and in grace; this will is not known to us until the facts make it appear. The will of God can be said to be done by us when our will is aligned to His will, in other words we do not stand in opposition to His will. Our will is according to His when we patiently submit to every adverse condition of providence; when our hearts and actions are conformed to some measure to His rule and authority. When what is done is done in faith with a view to His glory.

*“Give us this day our daily bread...”* After putting God’s interest first, we are permitted to present our own needs. This petition acknowledges our dependence on God for daily food, both spiritual and physical. The emphasis is not on the giving, but on the bread. Bread is a concrete and compact term for what we need to sustain our bodily life and also the “bread of life.” The disciples, as God’s children, receive all their bread as a gift from the Father’s hand. “Give us this day” is interpreted by Luke to mean, “Go on giving us day by day.” We have to adopt the mindset that we have enough to get us through the day, thus we should renew our petition daily, always depending wholly on the Father. God often and generally gives us more than we need for the day; but we should not come to expect that this will happen because in the midst of great plenty it can all be swept away in an instant. Our real safety lies in the Father alone. By teaching us this part of the prayer Jesus excludes greed and worry from our heart. ***Ps. 37:25; I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging for bread.*** The Psalmist merely stated his own experience. He personally had never seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging for bread. It does not say that it never occurs, but the point is that God takes care of His people. There is enough wealth in the world to provide food, clothing, and shelter for all. However, some do get more than their share while others suffer. If a good man is wasteful, acts unwisely, or speculates unduly, then God will not intervene to keep him from ruin. We must learn the general lesson well.

From this part of the prayer the Jews had a petition that they prayed daily; “The necessities of Thy people are great and their knowledge short. Let it be Thy good will and pleasure, O Lord our God, that Thou would give to everyone what is sufficient for his sustenance and to everyone’s body what it wants.” This prayer was designed to restrain from covetousness and to keep up the duty of daily prayer and a constant dependence on God. He is the sole author of our mercies which are His free gifts. We deserve nothing; therefore we ought to be thankful for what we have without murmuring at His providence or envying what He has given to others. All kinds of food, everything that is edible, are what the Jews called bread.

*“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...”* This does not refer to judicial forgiveness from the penalty of our sin (that forgiveness is obtained by faith in the Son of God). Rather this refers to the parental forgiveness that is necessary if fellowship with our Father is to be maintained. If believers are unwilling to forgive those who wronged them, how can they expect to be in fellowship with their Father who has freely forgiven them for their wrongdoings?

When we forgive others for a perceived wrong perpetrated against us, the word for “forgive” means to “dismiss” or “send away” the wrong. Scripture tells us that when God forgives us He sends the wrong away “as far as the east is from the west,” so that it will never be found again. In our language it would mean “so that it will never be brought up again.” It



goes without saying that this is not natural and this dismissal is effected by grace alone, through Christ, by contrition and faith—justification is by faith alone. So great are our debts to God that we can never hope to repay them and our only hope or confidence is in that God will remit them freely by way of a gift for Christ’s sake.

In view of this forgiveness that we think of asking for, we pray that our hearts will be cleansed of all resentment against others. “To dismiss our debtors” means that we no longer consider them as debtors. Their debts to us are as nothing compared with what we owe God. Our forgiving others is evidence that God’s grace has really brought faith in us and made us His children.

Nothing is more frequent in the Jewish writings than to call sins “debts.” In the prayer of Solomon it says “and hear Thou petition of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, which they shall make before this place and do Thou receive it from the place of the house of Thy Shekinah, from heaven, and do Thou accept their prayer and forgive them their debts.” We refer to our sins as debts not because they are so in themselves but because we owe satisfaction to the law and justice of God. The proper debts that we owe to God are love, obedience, and gratitude. And, being in default of those, we owe the debt of punishment. These debts are numerous and there is no way for any human to be capable of paying them. Therefore we pray to God that He will forgive them or remit the obligation of punishment for our sin. And He does for Christ’s sake and on account of His blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction made. Since this is a daily need, we need to ask daily for it. And we are to do the same for anyone that has sinned against us. These are sins of physical or verbal injury, and unkindness. Not only are we to forgive them but we are to pray that God will also forgive them. We need to caution ourselves here to not compare our forgiveness that we give to our debtors to God’s forgiveness that He gives us for our sin, because in us and our sinfulness our forgiveness is tainted by sin and definitely is not as complete and as perfect of forgiveness as God has shown us.

“*And do not lead us into temptation...*” The Lord’s Prayer now turns from past sins to possible future sins. This part of the prayer may seem like a contradiction to **James 1:13; Let no one say that when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God (or from God); for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.** However, God does allow His people to be tested and tried in order to build their faith and perseverance. In those times that we are tempted or tried we will not fall for the sin that is in front of us if we use all of the resources that God has made available to us to resist this temptation. It is only when we abandon God and His help in our arrogance that we begin to believe that we can withstand this temptation without His help that we fall into sin. This petition expresses a healthy distrust of one’s own ability to resist temptations or to stand up under trial. **James 1:12; Blessed is a man**

***who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*** This portion of the “Lord’s Prayer” acknowledges complete dependence on the Lord for preservation. ***1 Pet. 4:12-13; Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.*** This really settles the point that we are bound to be tempted and tried in this life. Scripture tells us how it is God’s desire for us to have the kind of attitude that we need to deal with these trials and temptations; ***1 Cor. 10:13; No temptation has overtaken you but such is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.***

“Temptation” here refers not only to the act of tempting or of being tempted but to any *situation* in which, because of our own weakness and Satan’s cunning, we should succumb to sin. The realm of attractive things where our lusts may carry us away and the realm of the things we dread; pain, shame, etc. where fright and cowardice may bring us to fall are included. Sometimes it’s just those little things that we are tempted lie about, of which, after all is said and done, we realize that we had no reason to lie. We just wanted to hide the truth of a situation because we think that the truth will cast us in a bad light or make us sound like a person that we don’t want others to believe that we are. To avoid falling for these temptations we need to ask our Father to take charge over us and thus not bring on the temptation in an effective sense and keep us out of some situations because our faith could not endure them and in other situations so to strengthen us so that we may be victorious. From this teaching we can see two things that stand out in this supplication; the faith which dreads the fall and the assurance that God will not let us fall. We pray that in these times of temptation that we would be humbled by our weaknesses and we would see the need for our faith and trust in Christ Jesus.

The Jews prayed this prayer with these words “do not lead me neither into sin, nor into transgression and iniquity, nor into temptation, or into the hands of temptation,” that is, into the power of it so as to be overcome by it and sink under it. This is the sense of what Jesus was telling His disciples in teaching them how to pray appropriately. He is not teaching His disciples to pray against temptations, because as we have learned, they can be needful and useful in building faith and perseverance; but He was teaching them to ask the Father to not let the temptation be so great that it has power over them and destroys them. We should ask the Father that we might be kept away from those things that make us an easy mark for Satan, we should pray for His wisdom to not go near the sources of our temptations and that He would

not leave us to Satan or our own corrupt hearts and make the way out a tempting situation obvious to us.

*“But deliver us from evil (or the evil one)...”* This is a part of the prayer that is prayed because we desperately want to be kept from sin by the power of God. It is our heart’s cry for daily salvation from the power of sin and Satan in our life. All moral wickedness is referred to here, and pain and distress only in so far as it may cause us spiritual injury. The deliverance that we ask for, while it includes the rescue from wickedness throughout our lives, really asks for deliverance and separation in our natural values and attitudes from the entire present evil age and on to a blessed death. God’s name and revelation bring us the grace by which we shall be delivered from this present evil age. In this respect the Lord’s Prayer resembles the Ten Commandments: the reverence and love of God is to free us from all coveting and lust.

When the Jews of Jesus’ time prayed their prayer of petition to be delivered from evil it went like this: “But deliver us from an evil accident and diseases; and do not trouble me with evil dreams and evil imaginations.” Some of the Jews either closed or started their prayer with the words “let it be Thy good pleasure.” Their petitions would continue to say: “O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, deliver us from unwise men and our lack of wisdom; from an evil man and from an evil accident and from an evil imagination i.e., the corrupt nature; from an evil companion and neighbor and from Satan the Destroyer, and from hard judgment and a hard adversary, whether he is the son of the covenant or not.” And most, if not all of these things may very well be thought of as being evil; particularly when Satan is spoken of as evil or the evil one, which we sometimes say ourselves in our Lord’s Prayer. Satan was and is acknowledged as being eminently, originally, and immutably evil. His whole work and purpose is nothing but evil. So theirs and our petition is to be delivered from him which, means to be rescued out of his hands or the power that he can have over us. We pray to be preserved from his snares, and delivered from his temptations. But, evil men can also be included as one that we want to be delivered from. All men are naturally evil and unalterably so without the grace of God. Some of these men are notoriously wicked from the company they keep and their sinful lusts and pleasures, to which they have become addicted to their rage and persecution against good men.

Our protection and response to such evil, when we speak of evil men, is one that also does not come naturally, that is, as we have been taught previously, is to pray blessings on these men in the hope that they will see the worthlessness of their ways and see the glory of God in theirs and our lives. To say that we cannot compare ourselves to where such as these men are living their life is to deny the grace of God, the work of Christ, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our own life because we have all started from the same place spiritually. “There but for the grace of God go I” applies here and it is with that attitude that we should pray for

such men, that they will hear and obey the conviction of Your Holy Spirit, just as we did to pull ourselves out of the gutter of our depravity.

*“For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, amen.”* This last sentence is omitted in the Roman Catholic and most modern Protestant Bibles since it is lacking in many ancient manuscripts and in the Gospel of Luke. However, such a doxology is the perfect ending to the prayer and is in the majority of manuscripts. It should, as John Calvin writes, “not only warm our hearts to press toward the glory of God... but also to tell us that all of our prayers and all of our prayer, has no other foundation than God alone.

Many commentators refer to **2 Tim. 4:18; *The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever, amen,*** as being the authority of adding the doxology to the end of this prayer. Many think that this doxology was added when the prayer came to be used in the church and was thus inserted with some variations into Matthew’s Gospel. No matter how or when it was used or inserted its ascription of praise fits the prayer and there is no reason to eliminate it if and when we repeat it. Why would it be unreasonable to have the opinion that Paul was merely following our Lord’s instruction of the appropriate wording and content of prayer? We never see in Scripture where Paul used these exact words to pray, on the other hand, we see continuously where Paul followed the form and content of the prayer.

For the conclusion of this part of the prayer the Jews prayed it this way; “For the kingdom is Thine and Thou shalt reign in glory forever and ever.” This was the usual response at the close of all of their prayers for them. Instead of “Amen” they prayed “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom, forever and ever.” This bears a close resemblance to the concluding expression that ascribes the everlasting kingdom, power, and glory to God; and this ought to be said to Him at the conclusion of all of our prayers. He is omnipotent, He has power to give us our daily bread; to forgive us of our sins; to preserves us from temptations. The glory is all His and to Him it must be and should be given forever and ever. Then it should be concluded with an “Amen” meaning that we are affirming all that we have prayed is the heartfelt truth that we believe, trust in, rely on and have faith in that all of our petitions will be fulfilled as He in His glory deems appropriate for His sovereign kingdom.

Why have I continuously pointed out the Jewish form of this prayer? It has been often said that this is the Lord’s Prayer, but there is no record nor can it ever be proved that Jesus made use of it. And all that we can say with certainty is that He did not make it, as it appears from what is cited from all of the Jewish accounts and records. The several petitions in it were already in use before He directed His disciples to pray in this way. Not only were the petitions already in use but also the preface and the conclusion were of Jewish origin. What the Lord did was take the most proper and pertinent petitions that had been used by good men among the

Jewish people, which with His alterations made it a much better prayer, and put them together in an appropriate order and gave His acceptance of the form and content. His reasoning was to give His disciples some of the best and most appropriate petitions in a way that gave the prayer brevity and conciseness. I am saying this not in an attempt to lessen anything that our Lord did or taught. This prayer, in His altered form, is an excellent pattern and has sound wording; every part of it is exceedingly instructive and worthy of imitation. But I say this to keep us from making the mistake of using this as a formal prayer that gets repeated over and over again and many have attached to it a superstition thinking that this is the formula to use to get what your heart desires, in the realm of the worldly or spiritual. Especially if we get into the habit of praying only this prayer; soon it becomes mechanical and loses all of its personal meaning. The worst thing that we can do is to turn this prayer into a chant, repeating it, as the pagans do with their prayers, hoping that the repetitions will provide assurance that our prayer will be heard and answered in the fashion that *our* will demands. The good Jewish men have a great prayer, but it seems as though through the generations the scribes and the Pharisees kept adding onto the prayer to make it long, equating longevity to piousness. Our Lord was merely trying to take the hypocrisy out of the prayer and instructing us to use this form and wording as a pattern and not a part of a daily practiced ritual.

In verse 14 we read that if we are willing to forgive men for their transgressions, then our heavenly Father will forgive us of our transgressions. At first glance this seems like a conditional statement to receive forgiveness, that is, God will not do what we are not willing to do. In other words we are, in a sense, setting the bar for righteousness and asking God to measure up to our standard of righteousness. However, if we dig deeper into our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ we will see that what I think He is doing is teaching us the same thing that James teaches us when he talked about faith and works in **2:14-26**. He summed it up by saying, **2:26; for just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead**. Forgiveness is a part of the works that demonstrates our faith in Christ and His work of salvation. So, in my opinion when Jesus says that we will not be forgiven if we do not forgive, I believe it is because if we do not have a forgiving spirit, then we don't have, in addition, the faith to believe in the forgiveness that Christ offers us as a gift, and without that faith we cannot be saved from judgment. The one thing that makes us children of God and thus we are as brethren who can pray as brethren, is the fact that our sins are forgiven. We may not have anything else in common, but the one thing that draws us together is the knowledge that we are forgiven. If they are not forgiven, then we cannot be included as brethren or God's children and our prayers are in vain. One of the obvious manifestations by which we may discern where we stand spiritually is our own forgiveness of others. For, if we forgive, God forgives us and then we can pray appropriately as our Lord instructed us. If we are unwilling to forgive, God cannot forgive us and our prayers cannot be appropriate, because we don't have a faith filled heart.

The reason why He singles out this work of faith in particular is because He knew the Jews were a people that were revenge prone as a part of their character. They had a hard time with forgiving injuries done to them and they had an urgency to see justice done. So Christ presses it upon them to forgive any trespasses that had been perpetrated against them. He taught them that this is more than a mere mechanical forgiveness, that is, more than just uttering the words, as we see so many toddlers forced to do by their parents. He taught that this forgiveness should come from the heart, the source of all of their impulses, passions and emotions. Such persons who are so disposed and assisted by His grace may expect forgiveness from Him also.

On the other hand where men do not have a disposition of forgiveness in their heart, how can they expect forgiveness from God? What sense of pardoning grace do they perceive as a reality? Do they have a right perception of the grace and goodness of God in the forgiveness of sin? If they did this would influence them in their mind and engage their heart to forgive them that had perpetrated an offense against them. If men, who are on equal footing with each other spiritually, should not forgive one another, how could they expect that our Father who is in heaven, who is so much higher than any of us in any and all respects, and who is in no way obliged to do anything for us, forgive us?

Zodhiates offers this commentary on vs. 12-15; “sins” are designed by two words, “debts” in verse 12 and “transgressions” in verse 14. Why did the Lord teach His disciples to pray, “do not lead us into temptation?” Does this actually imply that God does tempt people? The Greek noun for “temptation,” as well as the verb form is made up from one basic word, which in English is translated as “experience.” When God is the One who leads His people into temptation even as the Spirit led Jesus to be tempted, it is for the purpose of proving to His child that when God leads to temptation, He does not abandon him, but He is with him to give him the victory and to make him more experienced in warfare against the devil. It also teaches His children that they can rely on His wisdom and strength to see them through. The Lord never leads to temptation for the purpose of causing anyone to fall; the actual enticement to sin is never generated by God; but for the purpose of proving the sufficiency of His presence. When, however, one allows Satan or his own lusts to tempt him, he should never say that he is tempted by God.

### **Concerning fasting**

***Matt. 6:16 and whenever you fast do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do.***

Once again Jesus Christ addresses a portion of their spiritual life that the Jews had made legalistic and is very much a legalistic part of many “Christians” today. He emphasizes that our spiritual life should never be considered an obligation or a performance, but should proceed

from the heart of a man, that is, his deeds should be a result of his faith and this includes the times that they fast, **Matt. 6:16-18; And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance, (or, render their faces unrecognizable), in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.** What is the true definition of fasting and what role does it play in a person's spiritual life; when is it appropriate to fast and what do we hope to accomplish by it? As we tear into these verses hopefully we can answer these questions, the words translated and defined would read like this: *In addition, (to forgiving men who trespass against you), so often as you privately abstain from eating so as to give concentration to prayer, do not put on your countenance the affect of sadness that corresponds to the countenance of one who acts pretentiously, a counterfeit Christian, or a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character, because they render their faces unrecognizable in such a manner so as to be seen abstaining from eating so as to give concentration to prayer, by everyone. I, who am the truth itself, tell you a most certain and infallible truth, they are in possession of what they have worked for in full. However, you, so often as you abstain from eating so as to give concentration to prayer, rub the top of your head with oil as a token of joy and wash your face as you are accustom to doing in a manner that you may not be seen abstaining from eating so as to give your concentration to prayer by anyone, however, Your Father in heaven, who moves in a way that is not seen by others, and your Father in heaven who does things in a way that cannot be seen by others, will do whatever is necessary in fulfilling what is expected of Him, bearing witness to you, restoring you, rendering an account for you and keeping His oaths to you and make you shine in public.* The third form of religious hypocrisy that Jesus denounced was the deliberate attempt to create an appearance of fasting. The hypocrites disfigured their faces when they fasted in order to look as though they were hungry, haggard, and mournful and melancholy. But Jesus told His disciples that these looks did not make them look holy, but more like hypocrites.

To fast is to abstain from gratifying any physical appetite. It may be voluntary, as in these passages, or involuntary as in **Acts 27:33; And until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating having taken nothing."** **2 Cor. 11:27; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, (or, often in wakefulness), in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and in exposure, (or, nakedness).** In the NT it is associated with mourning, **Matt. 9:14, 15; Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we see the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The attendants, (or, sons of the bridal chamber), of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."** Fasting is also associated with prayer, **Luke 2:37;**

***And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers. Acts 14:23; And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*** In these passages fasting accompanied prayer as an acknowledgement of one's earnestness in discerning the will of God.

Fasting has no merit as far as salvation is concerned; neither does it give a Christian special standing before God. A Pharisee once boasted that he fasted twice a week; however, it failed to bring him the justification that he desired. But when a Christian fasts secretly as a spiritual exercise, God sees it and rewards it. While fasting is not commanded in the NT, it is encouraged by a promise of reward. It is valuable in times of crisis when one wishes to discern the will of God. And it is of value promoting self-discipline. Fasting is a matter between the individual and God and should only be done as a desire to please Him. It loses its value when it is imposed from the outside or displayed from a wrong motive.

In the Jewish community fasting often accompanied prayer. The law required fasting only on the Day of Atonement. The Jews fasted also on anniversaries of national calamities and in cases of great drought. Here, however Jesus is referring to the private fasting such as was the practice by the Pharisees on every Thursday, (when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai) and on Monday, (when he came down again). Fasting and sorrow went together. It had its place in Judaism not as an ascetic or disciplined practice but as an accompaniment of prayer when expressing deep sorrow for sin and asking God to turn His penalties away. But the Pharisees practiced private fasting as a means to secure the reputation of great holiness among the people. Since they were seeking the applause of men alone, when they got it they had the wages they wanted, paid down at once in full.

The Pharisees and the scribes actually put black ashes on their face to project their fasting onto other people. "Whoever," they say, "makes his face black, on account of the law in this world; God will make His brightness to shine in the world to come." These are the practices that they used so that they might appear to men as to being fasting. So they either didn't fast at all and just pretended to by putting this black on their faces, or they did not fast for a spiritual reason, but only to get noticed by and applauded by men. Their view of fasting was not to satisfy their own conscience, or to please God, but that they might have the glory of men and a secure spot in their society.

If believers are going to fast it should be something that is done anonymously, unless a whole congregation has decided to fast. If we do it anonymously then there is no danger of doing with the wrong motives. When verse 17 tells us to anoint our head and wash our face Jesus is telling us to just go about in your normal manner, there should not be anything in your countenance or your dress that would indicate to anyone else that we are fasting. It is enough



that our Father in heaven knows and the reward that He will give us and the satisfaction that we get from Him will be more than any human could give us.

Anointing of the head and washing the face was directly contrary to the Jewish religion. Their law forbade these things, along with others, on days of fasting. They said, "On the day of atonement a man is forbidden to eat, drink, wash and anoint, putting on shoes and the use of a bed." In anointing the head was always anointed first because if you were to anoint the whole body you would lose the tenant that the head is the king over all of the members. Anointing and washing were to be signs of joy. What Jesus was directing them to do as far as fasting was quite contrary to the customs of the Jews, who when they fasted, particularly on their days of fasting, brought out "the ark" into the streets of the city and put burnt ashes on it. They also put ashes on the head of the prince, the president of the Sanhedrin, and every man that was present. All of this was done for a show to other men, but Christ directs them to do their fasting anonymously and any other way is an abomination to Him. Some religions have kept this practice up to this day, especially on "Ash" Wednesday.

When we think about "anointing" with oil we can't help but think about Jesus Christ being called the Anointed One. So let's take a look at what this term "anointed" actually means and what it meant to the Jews of Jesus' time. The Jew was not only accustomed to rubbing his head with oil or ointment at feasts in token of joy, but also the head and the feet of those whom he wished to distinguish by a special honor. In the case of sick persons and also the dead they rubbed the whole body, ***Luke 7:37, 38; And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner, (or, an immoral woman), and when she learned that He was reclining at the table of the Pharisees house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with perfume. Ps.23:5; Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Ps. 45:7; Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of joy above thy fellows. Eccl. 9:8; Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head.*** Anointing was also done by the Greeks and the Romans. Sometimes this rubbing was used for physical relaxation after washing. So we can see by these examples that Jesus was trying to change the mindset when it came to fasting; He wanted it to be a time of joy, relaxation, and an opportunity to be distinguished as a time of honor, not a time of sadness or mourning.

When we call Jesus the Messiah, the word Messiah in Hebrew means "the anointed King." It has the same meaning in the Greek when translated as "Christ." When we speak of anointed Christians we are referring to them as "set apart to the service and ministry of Christ and His gospel by the gift of the Holy Spirit", ***2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Now He who establishes us with***

***you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge, (or, down payment).***

There can be some confusion when we speak of “anointed” because in the Greek there are two distinct words with differing definitions that both translate into English as “anointed.” “*Chr’io*” has a sacred or religious meaning and “*alel’pho*” means to oil or rub with oil, both are translated “anoint” in English without any distinction. Since the English translation “anoint” also bears the connotation of sacredness, dedication, and the other translation does not, and since both words are translated by the same word, much confusion has arisen in the exegesis (the explanation, critical analysis, or interpretation) of the passages. Because of the distinction that exists between these two words, it is necessary for us to examine the passages where each occurs.

The verb *alei’pho*, means to besmear or oil, and is the one that is used in our study of Matt. 6:17. The meaning here is evidently that the person who was fasting should use ointment so that his face would look refreshed and not express a sad countenance. This word has nothing to do with ceremonial anointing. In ***Mark 6:13; And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them;*** they were rubbing oil as a medicinal means many that were sick and healed them. Some have argued that because the works here were undoubtedly supernatural then the anointing must’ve been sacral in nature. But, two problems hamper this position. First of all, in sacral anointing, the oil is viewed largely as a visible symbol along with which divine activity occurs. No efficacy (effectiveness) is attached to the element itself. God works, we might say, supernaturally and coordinately with the human action. However, in the case at hand, the application of oil was an instance of a common medical procedure of that day and was looked upon as the immediate agent of healing. That the healings were instantaneous and thoroughly effectual indeed required a special work by God to accelerate the process and exaggerate the results of the oil’s healing power. Yet here God’s work was not supra-natural (above the natural) but supernatural (within nature but extending the normal limits) operating through oil and not simply alongside it. Lastly the ritual modes in which sacred anointing were usually administered and the mystery in which they were shrouded are conspicuously absent from the scene. The disciples here are not priestly officials performing cultic ritual; they are representatives of Jesus sent out to proclaim in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, the significance of Jesus’ circumventing, (going around), the Levitical body and its work are critical in understanding the import of the disciple’s action. Such a gesture was in effect invalidating or treating as obsolete the OT order and signaling the inception of the NT. In this new economy, all men are priests and all things are sacred. In this light it would be possible to speak of these healings as quasi-sacramental (as if God had no option but to respond to their wishes). Nevertheless, the context of the passage and the teaching of Scripture on the subject would not allow one to classify the disciple’s deed

as strictly sacral. Elsewhere, we see that oil was used for medicinal purposes as in the parable of the Good Samaritan and also in James where “anointing him with oil” means having rubbed the sick person with oil. The injunction, (or bidding) by James is that medicinal means should be applied prior to prayer. It is also to be remembered that as priests were to show concern for the body, so also the elders of the local church. In **Mark 16:1; “And when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”**, we clearly see that this means the application of ointments and spices to the dead body as was the custom in Palestine. Such an application of ointments did not have any resurrection power, nor was it meant to prevent decomposition.

### **Treasures in heaven**

**Matt. 6:19 where your treasure is there will your heart be also.**

Jesus next teaches His disciples, how to have a new attitude toward trust in God for all of life’s material needs, **Matt. 6:19-21; Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** Jesus is telling us that there is nothing of value in the present evil age that you can take with you into His kingdom, and furthermore there are no needs for anything that this age has to offer that is beneficial to you in His kingdom. All of the things that we consider valuable that comes out of this present evil age have had its value set by man and it is all worthless in God’s eyes. So let’s take an amplified look at these verses to get a deeper understanding of what Jesus Christ is teaching us here: *Do not let yourself continue to store up goods for future use here on earth, where moths and also corroding rust completely corrupts and spoils your goods, renders it as rotten, causing it to disappear, or which causes metal to lose its proper function, and also where thieves break through the walls to steal your goods. Instead, continue to be storing up goods for the future in the place where the believers are going to receive their inheritance which is incorruptible, where moths and also corroding rust do not corrupt and spoil your good, that is, where outside conditions cannot rendered it as rottenness, where it does not disappear and is not subject to lose its proper function and where thieves do not break through the walls to steal; because where your good disposition is, that is the place where those whose center of life has been made pure by Jesus Christ will continue to be also.* This passage contains some of the most revolutionary teachings of our Lord—and some of the most neglected. The theme of the rest of the chapter is how to find security for the future. These verses state why the *place* is so important in the matter of treasures and of treasuring. What really makes a treasure valuable is the affection of the heart. He whose treasures are on earth has his heart anchored to the earth; he whose treasures are in heaven has his heart anchored there. That is, where the things are

that arouse your passions, emotions, and impulses are that is where you are going to invest your time, energy, and usually your money, being focused on everything that you consider to have value. If you consider the accumulation of money, precious metals, social status, possessions and power, as the things that make you feel proud or important that is where you will eventually have your identity. If you are concerned with serving God, ministering to others, allowing Jesus Christ to administrate your life and you spend your time and energy following that course, that is where you will find your identity, passions, emotions, impulses; following and doing what is important to you.

Heaven has a quite different economy than what we experience in this present evil age. Nothing in heaven can be bought, sold, or bartered for. There once was a price on our entrance into heaven but it was more expensive than any man could have paid. It was a true one- time sale that will never come again and there was only one man who had the qualifications to pay the price, that person is our Lord Jesus Christ; the only one who was rich enough in purity and righteousness, and He was so because material possessions and position had no meaning for Him; He was righteous enough that when He was examined by the most vigorous of interrogators they could find no sin in Him.

The price was costly, giving up the entirety of His human life in all and every aspects, for the will of the Father, but He accepted His mission of giving up His life to save man without any hesitation because of the love that He has for His fellow man. His last request was simply that His disciples would follow Him in His example that He had set forth while He was here on earth by not getting caught up in material wealth and a socially exalted position; instead He wanted His disciples to put all of that energy into their salvation and the salvation of others by practicing and teaching the good news.

Nothing on earth has eternal or infinite value, we can see that by watching the stock market or the price of gold as it breaks record highs one day and record lows the next. Everything here on earth is subject to corruption in one form or another, either morally or physically, or both. As a believer our status in heaven never changes and its value is eternal and infinite; Satan has no power over our treasure in heaven, we don't have to wonder day to day or week to week if our status has changed, that is, if we have the same value in heaven today as we had yesterday because of something we did or didn't do, say, or think. And we don't have to hire a guard to keep it from being stolen from us. Anybody with a sense for investing could not turn down this opportunity for a safe investment that would multiply in value and was incomparable in value with anything on earth. This is where our heart should be, that is the focus of our passions, impulses, emotions and affections.

If your treasure is in a safe deposit box, then your heart and desire are there also. If your treasures are in heaven, your interests will be centered there. This teaching forces us to decide

or believe whether Jesus meant what He said in verse 6:19-21. If He did speak the truth, then we face the question, what are we going to do with our earthly treasures? If He didn't then we have to face the question, what are we going to do with our Bible? Hypocrisy deceives others, yet it deceives the person guilty of hypocrisy most of all. From the deception of others Jesus turns to the deception of self; and the example He uses is the seeking of perishable treasures on earth instead of the imperishable in His kingdom. The cure for this folly is the same as the cure for all deception; the disciples must keep the Father continually before their eyes. Jesus brings out self deception by making the basic statement that when you store up treasure on earth you think you have a treasure when in reality you have nothing as you stand before your ultimate judge. Earth is no place to store treasure, for here on earth any treasures that we may seek to keep for ourselves are subject to all manner of destructive forces.

Clothing and food are just two of the treasures that men treasure and seem to worry about. So here in these verses Jesus mentions the moth and eating which makes clothes and human food disappear. A moth-eaten garment, however costly it may have been, is unsightly after the moths have made a meal out of it and it must be thrown away, and our food disappears by being eaten either by ourselves or by vermin. Clothes wear out, food spoils, and we lose other valuables in ways other than by theft. But these three are sufficient to indicate how foolish it is to lay up treasures on earth. Though we can succeed in keeping the moth and the thieves away, all earthly treasures are transient because they are subject to destructive forces.

Is Christ saying here that we must live in abject poverty and that planning ahead for the future is futile? No, the main objective here is to dissuade His disciples from covetousness and worldly-mindedness. His objective is to calm the fears of those who seem to be in a constant worry about tomorrow's provision while not accomplishing what God has set before them today to accomplish. We have our mind set on preserving our earthly life or life-style to the extent that we lose our most important focus, that is, eternal fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to teach against the practice of hoarding up plenty of worldly things for ourselves, for a *possible* time or need to come, making no use of them at this present time for the good of others; to see someone in need today, but not be willing to take from your surplus what you have stored up in order to help them in need today. And this He does by the nature of the things He mentioned in and of themselves; the places that they are laid up, the difficulty of keeping them, and their liableness to be corrupted or lost.

Just as in the verse preceding Jesus tells His disciples to "stop treasuring," He tells them here to "start treasuring." Stop treasuring or investing in this present evil age and start investing in treasuring in heaven. In heaven is the exact opposite of the earth. The locations or the places mark where we put our passions, emotions, affections and impulses and they

characterize our respective treasures. The treasures in heaven are neither fine garments, rich and abundant bodily food, or earthly valuables of any kind; so these things are not the treasures that Jesus is concerned with that will eventually be destroyed as they could be on earth. What these heavenly treasures are we are told in verse 33, "God's rule and authority in our lives and His righteousness." That is, we should be concerned for, and seek after, heavenly treasure, the riches of glory, the joys and glories of another world which infinitely excel over everything that is valuable on earth. We should also lay up our earthly treasures in heaven; that is, put them into the hands of God in heaven. This is done by liberally communicating with the poor, **Luke 12:33; sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. 1 Tim. 6:18, 19; Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.** Luke, in his verses, tells us the same thing that Jesus told the rich young ruler, "go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven," unfortunately the rich young ruler had become too attached to his earthly possessions and could not follow Jesus' command. Have we been wise in our earthly investments? Is our earthly treasure abundant in God's eyes? Does our ability to invest wisely give us the right to hold onto these wise investments without sharing with the less wise or less gifted? **Prov. 13:8; the ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor hears no rebuke.** We must not lose sight of the fact that our wisdom is also a gift given to us from God and some have greater wisdom, some lesser. This is no different than having a gift of teaching, as an example, and not having the gift of teaching; to those whom do not have the gift to teach they will have a less ability to teach. Just because we are good teachers does not mean that we should keep all of our knowledge to ourselves and not teach those who are not good teachers. All of the resultant good that comes from our gifts was intended to be shared with the whole church community; our gifts were never intended to induce us to hoarding or withholding from others who are less fortunate or less gifted. **1Cor. 7:7; yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. 1Pet. 4:10, 11; as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever, amen.**

To make use of your treasure for His glory is to place it where moth and rust cannot corrupt it; and we might add where our greed, covetousness, and lusts cannot corrupt it. Treasures are safer here in heaven than in our own hands, and will turn out better and more to our advantage, both in this life and the life to come. **Matt. 19:21; Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete (or, perfect), go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you**

***shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.***” We should take note here that the poor, by definition, is someone who has less than you; in this verse if we *truly* want to follow Jesus Christ, (be complete), we can’t carry a lot of earthly baggage with us, neither physical nor psychological.

Heaven is often represented by Jewish writers as a treasury; and the treasures that are said to be in it are said to be “treasures of life, treasures of peace, and treasures of blessing.” ***Deut. 31:16; And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers;*** the paraphrase of this verse by the Jews goes like this: *And the Lord said unto Moses, thou shalt sleep in the dust with thy fathers and your soul shall be treasured up into the treasury of eternal life with thy fathers.* The true Jews understood the importance of laying up their treasure in heaven; sometimes we can inappropriately connect all Jews with the Pharisees and the scribes, but there were also Jews that clung to and worshipped God appropriately and righteously and followed His commands as He intended.

### **The light of the world**

#### ***Matt. 6: 22 the lamp of the body is the eye***

Jesus realized that it would be difficult for His followers to see how His unconventional teaching on security for the future could possibly work. So He used an analogy of the human eye to teach a lesson on spiritual sight. He said that the eye was the lamp of the body, and sometimes it has been said that the eye is the light to the mind that influences the body. It is through the eye that the body receives illumination and can see. If the eye is good, the whole body is flooded with light. But if the eye is bad, then vision is impaired. Instead of light there is darkness, and in the least case scenario the vision is blurred, ***Matt. 6:22-24; The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, (or, healthy), your whole body will be full of light. 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 the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon, (or, riches).*** Jesus, I believe, is pointing out here the importance of having a vision toward Christ and His values and attitudes, that is, a clear path to a destination without worldly distractions. If your eye is clear, that is, if your eye is not clouded with the values and attitudes of this present evil age, you will have a clear vision of heaven and of what God desires in a disciple. If your eye is clouded by the corruption of the present evil age, then corrupt values will be all that you will seek. Most of us have heard about the verse where Jesus talks about judging others by teaching us to not point out a splinter in your brother’s eye when you have a log in your own eye; that analogy is close to what He is telling us here also. If our eye is focused on the ways of the present evil age and we lust and covet after what the present evil age lusts and covets after, then we will be blinded by these things and never see the true

treasure that God has to offer us. Let's break these verses down to see if we can get a clearer understanding of what Jesus is teaching us: *The lamp of the your whole person, that is, that which formulates who you are as a person and enlightens you concerning spiritual things, is a sound eye; If therefore your eye is seeing single and not seeing double as a diseased eye would and your eye sees things as they are, then your eye is healthy, and you are prudent, a single minded person without duplicity, that is, you are not a person trying to serve this present evil age while serving God, you are a person that knows how to deal with fellow humans and the circumstances of life and your whole person will continue to be spiritually enlightened. If, however, your eye is diseased, that is, filled with envy and evil thoughts, your affections, emotions, and condition of your whole person, that is, that which formulates who you are as a person, will continue to be spiritually unenlightened, that is, full of ignorance and error, eternal misery and damnation, sin and misery, opposing the light of righteousness. If therefore the mind and the conscience that is in your body is full of ignorance and error, envy and evil thoughts, to what degree are you filled with sin and misery, (the same I would suspect)! No person that names himself as a Christian, has the power to continually obey or depend on two masters; because he will either slight the one and love or serve with fidelity the other; or he will cleave to one and neglect the other. You cannot obey the true God and the god of materialism.* Jesus continues to teach to the heart of a disciple, when we speak of a person's passions, emotions, impulses and affections, as He clearly does in the amplification of these verses, we are dealing with the "heart."

The application is this: The good eye belongs to the person whose motives are pure, who has a single desire for God's interests, and who is willing to accept Christ's teachings literally. His whole life is flooded with light. He believes Jesus' words, he forsakes his earthly riches, he lays up treasure in heaven, and he knows that this is the only true security. On the other hand, the bad eye belongs to the person who is trying to live for two worlds. He doesn't want to let go of his earthly treasures, yet he wants treasures in heaven too. The teachings of Jesus seem impractical and impossible to him. He lacks clear guidance since he is full of darkness.

Since by setting its affection upon something the heart makes a treasure of it, everything depends on the eye. "The lamp of the body is the eye." The eye is the one member of the body which acts as a lamp by which man sees. The context, however, limits the application to the treasures which the earth offers the body. These seek to captivate the eye and thus win the heart and the body and its affection. Everything thus depends on the spiritual quality of the eye.

When Jesus speaks of the eye with reference to the body, Jesus has in mind the earthly treasures which captivate the eye. These are bodily treasures, such as a desire for the latest



fashions from the name brand stores that indicate it has earthly value, a desire for wealth of food that indicates an upper class appetite, a desire to have more money than what has been provided to you, and other earthly valuables. How these treasures will be viewed by the eye in regard to the body will depend upon whether the eye is “single” or “double.” Both of these words describe a spiritual quality. The eye that is single looks to the one thing alone that is named in verse 33, ***But seek first, (or, continually seek), His kingdom, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added, (or, provided), to you.*** It sees this and this alone as its true treasure. And thus the entire body will be “full of light,” never for a moment deceiving itself in regard to bodily and earthly treasures as though these were genuine treasure. For the eye is the part of the body that can be compared to a candle in a house, by the light of it the members of the body perform their actions and what is said about the eye of the body is then transferred to the eye of the mind. When we enter into a person’s home does our eye look around to see the material furnishings of the house or does it look for the spiritual peace, love, and security. If a man is not covetous and his mind is disposed to generosity and liberality then all of his actions will be influenced by this noble principle.

The impossibility of living for God and for money is stated here in terms of masters and slaves. No one can serve two masters. One will inevitably take precedence in his loyalty and obedience. So it is with God and mammon or worldly possessions. They present rival claims and a choice must be made. Either we must put God first and reject the rule of materialism or we must live for temporal things and refuse God’s claims upon our lives. If we choose worldly possessions, the possessions will ultimately own you and you will become a slave to them.

The eye that is wicked, godless, and idolatrous looks at earthly treasures in a corresponding way. It places these ahead of God and His kingdom. Hence the entire body is full of darkness, full of the self-deception which places bodily and earthly treasures ahead of all others and sees them as the only possessions that are worth-while. The idea is not that the eye is blind. In this case the natural eye sees just as perfectly as the natural eye of the true disciple. But instead of being a light to the person concerned it is in reality darkness. Seeing, it does not see what is so plainly to be seen and thus it deceives.

Thus far the contrasts are exclusive: either treasures on earth or treasures in heaven. The self-deception thus lies in the choosing the one kind in place or the other. The proposition is again self-evident. A slave’s person and his work belong wholly to his master. This excludes the possibility of devoting himself and his work to second master. The thought that underlies this word of Jesus is the fact that no man is his own master; it is ingrained in our very nature that our heart, will, and work be governed by another. The only question is who or what will be “the other.”

Suppose one did try to be a slave to two masters. The two masters would surely not consent to such a thing, and the slave would only make a fool out of himself to try and make such an attempt. Thus the slave himself will demonstrate that he cannot be a slave to two masters. The slave makes one of the two his real master. It is mere self-deception to think that he is really slave to both masters. Since all of this is so plain and self-evident, Jesus makes the application; you cannot be slaves both to God and money. The cunning which would try to divide its devotion and its service between these two masters cannot possibly succeed; it only deceives itself. Money is a tool used by Satan to cause division and strife among people.

If you have a sordid disposition, that is, one that is morally impure, or if you have an avaricious temper, that is, if you are a covetous person and your sin of covetousness prevails over you, this is when your whole body is in darkness. All the powers and faculties of your soul will be enslaved by it and will be intent on gratifying it. This will cause your mind to always be sorrowful and sad, distressed and harassed and your general condition will be miserable and uncomfortable. As it is with the body, so it will be with the mind. When the literal eye of the body is put out for any reason it puts all the parts of the body in darkness. So when the light of reason in the mind is extinguished by our prevailing iniquities, and particularly covetousness, and it has gone on for so long that our whole person is influenced and governed by this sin, what can be the only possible end result? What will be the consequence of it be except the obvious, utter and eternal darkness, unless God's grace intercedes?

From a Jewish perspective of this verse, about serving two masters, they had a saying that was pretty much like the one that Jesus taught. Here it must be remembered that Jesus was Jewish and His primary audience at this time was also Jewish, so He was very familiar with the ways the Jews thought and what they taught, so I think it is interesting to get the Jewish point of view. Their sayings, like this one, went like this: *we have not found that any man is fit for two tables. And, it is not proper for one man to have two governments;* the meaning is that these two things cannot be done together, *for either he will hate the one and love the other.*

The word for "mammon" that Jesus used in this verse comes from a Syriac word and signifies money, wealth, riches, and substance, plus everything else that comes under the heading of "worldly goods." Mammon, according to the Jewish way of speaking and which was used by the Samaritans, is one of greed and applies to one who would have more than he ought. But, according to the Hebrew language the word for mammon comes from and it is called merely "Mam" and signifies one who is gluttonous, that is, one who can't refrain himself from gluttony. This word, in the Hebrew, can also signify riches which are opposed to God because they use their riches as an object of their love, who admire and trust in it and worship it as if it were a god. Such persons, whose covetousness is the nature of their heart, go after earthly riches and give themselves up to gain it. They eagerly and anxiously pursue riches

because they have placed all of their confidence in riches. Whatever pretenses they may make to the service of God, as did the scribes and Pharisees, cannot truly and heartily serve the Lord. We cannot serve the Lord with our sin.

The Jews in Jesus' time were notorious for the love of mammon and they themselves admit to this being the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple. The character of those who lived under the Second Temple government was this: "we knew that they labored in the law and took care of the commandments, and their tithes, and that their whole conversation was good, their failure was in the love of mammon and in hating one another without cause." A warning to us that live in this present evil age is this: In our attempt to improve our quality of life by means of the materialistic present evil age and what it has to offer could create the paradox of actually producing a lesser quality of life spiritually.

### **The cure for anxiety**

***Matt. 6:32 Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.***

In these passages Jesus strikes at the tendency that we have to center our lives on food, clothing, and material possessions thus missing life's real meaning. The problem is not so much what we eat and wear today, but what shall we eat and wear ten, twenty, or thirty years from now. There is a saying in the world that tells us to "not be insurance poor," that is, do not take what the Lord has given to you to sustain you through this day and store it away for a possible need in the future while you starve today and may not even see tomorrow! Such worry about the future is sin because it denies the love, wisdom and power of God. It denies the love of God by implying that He doesn't care for us, this kind of attitude says that we may have our provisions today, but I'm not sure about the future. It denies His wisdom by implying that He doesn't know what He is doing. And it denies His power by implying that He isn't able to provide for our needs. ***Matt. 6:25-34; for this reason I say to you; "do not be anxious, (or, stop being anxious) for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body (more) than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit, to his life's span, (or, height)? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like these. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? Do not be anxious then, saying, 'what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or with what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first, (or, continually seek), His kingdom, and His***

***righteousness; and all things shall be added to you, (or, provided). Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself, (or, will worry about its self). Each day has enough trouble of its own.***” The type of worry that Jesus mentions in these verses, which includes worry of any sort that is self-centered, causes us to devote our finest energies to making sure we will have enough to live on, which is quite natural, right? No, it is not natural, it is a wrong conclusion in the sense that our worrying or our anxiety is innate; it is something that we have learned by observing others. Then before we know it, our lives have passed, and we have missed the central purpose for which we were made. God did not create us in His image with no higher destiny than that we should consume food. That is the highest level that can be obtained of all the other animals. We are here to love, worship, and serve Him and to represent His interests on earth. Our bodies are intended to be our servants; not our masters. Our anxious worrying has always been a manifestation of the lack of faith in us; as the old saying goes; “if we are going to worry, why should we pray; and if we are going to pray why should we worry?” Anxious worrying is a result of the fall of Adam and it is not innate within our makeup in the way that God created us in His image. We never read in Scripture a time that Jesus worried. So let’s take a longer look at these verses to see what the cure is for anxiety: *On this account, after pointing out the futility of chasing after worldly goods, which only accomplishes anxiety, I say this to you: do not continually live being troubled about things in your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your living body, as to what you shall clothe yourself, that is, don’t worry about the common material things of life; that is sinful anxiety. Isn’t life itself much more than nourishment, and the living body much more than garments? Contemplate the birds of the over-arching, all embracing heaven, where the clouds are suspended, contemplate that they do not scatter seed to grow food, nor do they harvest, nor do they gather their sustenance into a storehouse, and yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. Do you not surpass them in worth to a degree much greater than the birds? And also, which one of you, by continuing to be troubled about things in your life, have the ability to add on to your life the length as little as the distance of even a single measure from the middle finger to the elbow to his size? In addition, why are you so concerned about your clothing? Take note accurately of the multicolored wild flowers of the country side, see how they are acted upon by an outside power and have the element of life in them; they do not weary themselves with labor, nor do they spin; now I speak these words to you to demonstrate to you that not even Solomon, who is celebrated for his wisdom, wealth, and splendor, in the whole of his accompaniments of royalty and his splendid apparel did not clothe himself like one of these wild flowers. However, if God alone enrobes the lilies of the field, which are alive this day and tomorrow they wilt are to be cast into the oven that bakes bread, will He not much more do so for you, O men that have very little faith? Therefore, do not continue to be troubled then, saying in these words, “what are we going to have to eat?” Or, “what are we going to drink?” Or, what garments are we going to clothe ourselves with?” Because all of these things that I am*

*telling you to not be anxious about are the same things that the heathens are continually seeking to acquire, striving after, and are longing for; so then believer trust that your heavenly Father, of whom you are children, intuitively knows and is aware of what your needs and desires are for all of the rest of your life and will supply these things to you completely. On the other hand what your heavenly Father desires from you is to continually strive after with earnestness and passion that which is chiefly the importance of His rule and authority in your life and His standard of righteousness; at that time the whole of your needs and desires, which are now heavenly, will be provided to you. So then, do not continue to be emotionally torn between what you need today and then add on top of that what your needs will be tomorrow because the fulfillment of these needs continually flow from the same one source; the next day will worry about itself. Everyday day has sufficient enough affliction of its own.* On the principle that was laid down for us and explained in verses 19-24 Jesus rests His admonitions and the illustrations on that which ought to keep us as undivided slaves of God and free from all attachment to mammon. "For this reason I say to you, stop worrying about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink or what are you going to wear." This statement implies that His disciples had expressed some concern, perhaps when Jesus wanted them to follow Him with nothing in the way of material possessions and they reacted in the same way that we probably would have, and this needed to cease. He wanted them to bring only the minimum with them because worry about earthly and bodily needs turns the heart to these things and away from God. But if we think about this in a common sense frame of mind would He who gave us life fail to give us what is necessary to sustain life? This elementary logic ought to place us above worry for our needs.

Jesus is not telling us that He forbids us from working to maintain, support, and preserve our life. Nor does He forbid all care and thought about it; what He does forbid His disciples to do is to be anxious, perplexed, and distressed about it, because these things originate from being overly concerned about self and unbelief that leads to despair, which is dishonorable to God. Eating and drinking, of course, are necessary for the preservation of life and our clothes are necessary to protect ourselves from the elements, but God has given us these things without any of man's thought or input into the matter. He will give us whatever is necessary to preserve our valuable life and, carry out our ministry because He is the author of this life.

The birds of the air illustrate God's care for His creatures. They preach to us how unnecessary it is for us to worry. They do not have in mind to plant any crops to assure themselves that they will have something to eat in the future, nor do they harvest anything to be put in storehouses or barns, yet God feeds them. Since, in God's hierarchy of creation, we are more valuable than the birds, then we should surely expect that God will take care of our needs also.

But, we should not infer from this that we need not work for the supply of our present needs. Paul reminds us in **2 Thess.3:10; for even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.** Nor should we conclude that it is wrong for a farmer to sow, reap, and harvest. These activities are a necessary part of His providing for our current needs. What Jesus forbids here is the multiplying barns in an attempt to provide future security independent of God, (a practice that He condemns in His story of the rich farmer taught to us in **Luke 12: 16-21) And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a certain rich man was very productive and he began reasoning to himself saying; ‘what shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ “And he said. ‘This is what I shall do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and all my goods.’ ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ “So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”** The argument is that if God sustains us, *without* their conscious participation, creatures of a lower order, He will all the more sustain, *with* active participation, those for whom creation took place.

Here again we see the key words to where our focus should be, “Your heavenly Father.” The cure for all hypocrisy, as He referred to in verses 2-18, and for all self deception is this, that we keep our eyes upon our heavenly Father. Though He made the birds and feeds them, He is in a relationship as a father only to us who are His children in Christ Jesus. So it goes without saying that His children are much more important to Him than any creature.

To His Jewish listeners this was not a new concept or new way of thinking about how God will sustain us because there is a similar verse in **Psalms 147:7-9; sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praises to our God on the lyre, who covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens which cry.** Jesus wants us to contemplate the birds and the source of their survival and then compare it to the attitudes that we can get caught up in when we become self indulgent. We have the opportunity to sow, reap, and gather every year, yet we have trouble fully trusting that God will provide, even when year after year after year He proves to us that He will provide for our needs. We have a distinct advantage over the birds that are completely dependent on God for their provision; at least we can participate in our provision to give us that little extra reason to have faith in Him. For example, we till the earth to give the seed a better chance to remain in the ground for growth, we plant seed in fertile soil and if need be we fertilize it, if the earth is too dry we have the option to irrigate, we can give the crop insecticides or herbicides if necessary to ensure a more plentiful crop. We have much more reason to believe that God will provide, yet we are the most skeptical. With our

participation in sustaining ourselves we should have even less trouble trusting in God's provision than the birds that are completely helpless to do anything without God's provision.

Along with the Psalm quoted above The Jews of Jesus' time had a familiar teaching that went like this: *Did you ever see a beast or a fowl that had a trade? But they are fed without trouble. Did you ever see a lion bearing burdens, a bird gathering summer fruits, a fox that was a money-changer or a wolf selling pots? Yet they are nourished without labor. Yet why were they created? To serve me and I am created to serve my Maker. For if these, that were created to serve me after this manner, are supported without trouble; I who was created to serve my Master, is not fit that I should be supplied without trouble? And what is the reason that I am sustained with trouble? My sins.* This teaching that refers to "my sins" no doubt refers back to Adam's sin and God's judgment on him, **Gen. 3:18; Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.** Some of us would read this verse and only see what they understand as an unfair indictment on the rest of the human race, because of the sin of one man all of mankind from then on should suffer as Adam. Are we paying for another man's sin? The answer to this question is very simple and very humbling in that we proved that we would do the very same thing that Adam did the first time that we arrogantly sinned against God. We are given the same option that Adam had daily and daily we fail to make the right choice and at times others suffer for our sin also.

Worry about the future is not only dishonoring to God—it is also futile. The Lord demonstrates this with His question, "which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his lifespan?" a short person cannot worry himself eighteen inches taller. Yet, relatively speaking, it would be far easier to perform this feat than to worry into existence all of the provisions for one's future needs.

The question about length of life completes the thought connected with the birds and their food. While a cubit, or about 18 inches, is used in reference to stature, it is also used with reference to length of life. But if we think of this word in reference to our stature it seems like a ridiculous thought. Who except a dwarf or a child would want to be 18 inches taller? All of the OT references refer to length of life; worry does not add to the length of your life, it shortens it. One would think that the majority of Christ's hearers of His sermon were fully grown and could not hope to have any additional height added to them; however, more days added to their life, the majority would agree to have this done for them. But this would be a very small thing which men cannot do, like we read in **Luke 12:26; If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?** To add a cubit to a man's height is a great deal; the stature of the average man is six feet, or three cubits. And to add one more makes a large

addition to his stature, but to apply this to a man's age (e.g. adding eighteen minutes or hours) is a small thing and yet it is something that men can't do. The point of these words is this; that no man, by all of the care and thought that he can make use of, is ever able to add one cubit to his days. He can't lengthen out his life one year, one month, one day, one hour, nor even one minute. So why be anxious over the things in life that we have no control over?

Next our Lord goes from our worrying about food and prolonging life to dealing with the unreasonableness of worrying that we will not have enough clothing in the future, which is equally useless, foolish, and hurtful. The lilies of the field are probably wild flowers, they do not toil or spin, that is they have nothing to do with how they are dressed, yet their beauty surpasses that of Solomon's royal garments, which is man's attempt at making the most beautiful clothing possible within human capacity. If God can supply such a beautiful array of colorful dress to wild flowers, which have a short existence and then are used for fuel for the ovens, He will certainly care for His people who worship and serve Him. As the birds of the heaven in verse 26 are those that fly freely, so the lilies of the field are those that grow wild, without human care. The focus that Jesus wants us to look at is "how they grow." Without labor of any kind and without spinning a thread they come to wear garments so exquisite that even Solomon, a person who wanted for nothing, could not match. Jesus Christ, no doubt was using wildflowers and birds as props. He doesn't direct His listeners to the lilies or the flowers which grow in gardens, those that have the advantage of the management of a gardener. But He addresses the wildflowers of the field where the art and care of men are not exercised. Remember, He was teaching on a mount, in an open space and He could point to the birds of the air that were flying in their sight; so too the wild flowers in the adjacent fields and valleys. Here He could literally have them look at the props of what He was teaching so they could contemplate and consider in their minds what He was preaching.

Both the designation "grass" for the little lily plants and the description of their brief life and beauty heighten the contrast with the disciples who are destined for eternal life. In a country where fuel was scarce, dried grass and stalks of all kinds were used to heat the ovens for baking. If God enrobes the lowly and transient lilies so gorgeously, He will surely give common garments to His far greater creatures. We can trust that as "God" our Creator, under whose gracious providence all of His children live, He will provide us with the clothes that we need. Will it be as royal clothing, not by outward appearance, but anyone who is need of clothing will appreciate any clothes that God sends to them whether they are new or second-hand, and they will thus feel like royalty, especially knowing that God's word is truth and the King did what He said He would do, so we live as kings in His kingdom.

When Jesus finishes this verse by saying "O men of little faith" it is a term that is found four times in the NT, three times in Matthew and once in Luke. This title, that He addresses the



doubting disciples with, is placed effectively at the end of the verse and it shows that Jesus is still speaking to His disciples although He uses the word “God” in place of “your heavenly Father,” when referring to the raiment of the lilies of the field.” While the term, which was implied several times in the OT and the Jews were familiar with this term, admits the truth of His disciples, it reproves the littleness of this trust, which is evidenced by the worry that still persists. Our trust in Him ought to shut out any bit of worry that we have.

The conclusion then is that we should not spend our lives in anxious pursuit of food, water, clothing, or material possessions for the future or even the present as far as that goes. This is what the people who are embracing this present evil age spend the majority of their time doing; they live for the crazy accumulation of material things, as if food and clothing were their whole life. But it should not be so with Christians, who have a heavenly Father who knows their basic needs.

If Christians were to set before them the goal of providing in advance for all their future needs, then their time and energy would have to be devoted to the accumulation of financial reserves. They could never be sure that they had saved enough because there is always the danger of market collapse, inflation, catastrophic prolonged illness, or a paralyzing accident. This means that God would be robbed of the service of His people. The real purpose for which they were created and converted would be missed. Men and women bearing the divine image would be living for an uncertain future on this earth when they should be living with eternity’s values in view.

Jesus points out that His way of thinking or believing is opposed to the way that the Gentiles operate their lives; here in this passage Gentiles represent all of the pagan nations as well as individuals. Jesus teaches us that worry is like heathen unbelief. The pagan world knows nothing about God who is “our Father,” as referred to in verse 9, in Christ Jesus. And their moral life follows after their beliefs or more accurately, their unbelief. In verse 7 Jesus points to these pagans as a horrible example and He asks His disciples (and us) if we want to descend to that abominable level. Since Jesus is speaking mainly to Jews, this reference to Gentiles is highly effective. Pagan people imagine that they themselves must provide for their needs, hence their seeking is bent upon all of this worrying. But the disciples live on a higher plain while they are in this world; they have a Father in heaven that has promised to care for all of their needs; all as in “every” and all as in “completely.” And “He knows that you have need for all of these things even before you ask Him.” Being, indeed, your Father of heavenly character, almighty and full of love especially for His children, He will act accordingly. Leave all of your worries to Him. If we choose to worry, what we are doing in reality is lowering ourselves beneath the birds and the plants in the creation order. This activity and expression of words are the expressions of the men of little faith.

The greater part of the pagan world thought that the soul perished with the body at the time of death. Few of them thought that anything remained after death, and those that did spoke very doubtfully about it. So it's no wonder that they greedily sought after and were anxiously concerned for where their food, clothing, and financial support were coming from and how they could appropriate it. And for a lot of them this was the extent of what they expected was going to make them happy, relying solely on materialism for their happiness. So everything that they could acquire came through their own self-centered planned out thoughts, diligence, and perseverance. But for the Jews and also the few Christians at this time, who have a divine revelation in Jesus Christ, the knowledge of God and His providence, they have a future state after this life. So to act as the heathens do is exceedingly unbecoming, absurd, and from an evil source. Besides that, such greedy desires, disproportionate care, and anxious worry, are all together unnecessary.

These words that Jesus was teaching His disciples, as well as us are not intended to be demeaning or condemning to those who are in this worrisome condition, but they are intended to be words of encouragement to believe. He wants them to believe that He will bestow upon them whatever they need for food, drink, and clothing. They have an interest in Him, being related to Him, and they do not have to doubt His paternal care and affectionate regard for them. Their Father has all things at His command and He will do whatever He pleases here on earth and it pleases Him to care for His children. He knows all things, all their emergencies, difficulties, wants, and necessities. He knows what they need every day; therefore they may depend on Him and His power to relieve them.

The Lord, therefore, makes a covenant with His followers. He says, in effect, "If you put God's interests first in your life, I will guarantee your future needs. If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then I will see to it that you never lack the necessities of life." Jesus' disciples will "seek" just as ardently as the pagans, but what they seek is something far beyond the thought of the heathen world. This supreme thinking is described in the first part of Jesus sermon; it is a hunger and thirst that is a distinctive mark of all of Christ's disciples. The desire for the kingdom and His righteousness is constantly satisfied because what we seek is ours by grace. In other words we will find what we are seeking after. Yet the seeking is always continual for the object of our desire which can be more fully attained, that is, the more we seek to know about God the more we will come to know Him and this knowing is perpetual and infinite. This seeking is the desire for a regenerate heart to enter into a fuller union with God. Grace kindles that desire and keeps it active in this life. The more we desire to learn, the more we will come to know and the knowing has no end.

To seek His kingdom is to desire more and more participation in the rule of the Father's grace in Christ, enjoying more and more the blessings that we should return to Him by way of

our praise and that rule of grace eventually becomes a rule of glory. Only the righteous can participate in His kingdom, so all who are seeking the kingdom are at the same time seeking after His righteousness, that which He prepared for us in Christ, bestows on us by faith, and ever acknowledges as righteousness in His judgment. "To seek" means on our part "to seek to obtain and enjoy." The treasures that believers seek are God's royal rule and His righteousness.

When Jesus teaches us that "all of these things will be *added* to you," He is not implying that we make earthly treasures the object of our seeking as long as we make them take second place." This would contradict all that Jesus teaches. What more closely resembles what He is teaching is that He who seeks the kingdom first will seek all other things from the Father in the right way, by humble and submissive prayer, without worry, and without a false estimate of our need for these other things. Thus Christ's promise will be fulfilled: all of these will be supplied to you, **1 Kings 3:11, 12; And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.**

God's righteousness is to be diligently sought after and preferred before our earthly necessities are met, that is, before our food, drink, clothing, or any enjoyment in life. This is not the righteousness of man that Jesus refers to, but of God and the righteousness of Christ. It is called God's righteousness because He is the One who wrought it; it is what God accepts, approves of, and imputes and is the only righteousness that can justify us for admittance into His kingdom. Heaven is to be sought for as a first priority, as the perfection of the saint's happiness; and Christ's righteousness is to be sought for and accomplished through faith, as the ways and means of enjoying that happiness. After we have submitted ourselves to this righteousness He will add the necessities for living on earth. The Jews say that "no good sign will be shown to Israel until they return and seek these three things: *The Lord and His kingdom, fearing the Lord and His goodness, and Lebanon, (the mountain range north of Israel that was promised by God to be their northern boundary).*"

This is God's social security program. We can be secure in His promises. The believer's responsibility is to live for the Lord, trusting God for the future with unshakeable confidence that He will provide for anything that you need. One's job is simply a means for providing for current needs; everything above this is invested in the work for the Lord. We are called to live one day at a time: tomorrow can worry about its own troubles.

