

THE GIVING THAT GOD BLESSES

Matthew 6:1-4

Intro: Today we move into a new section of the Sermon on the Mount.

We can call this the third. In the first we had the Beatitudes which are in chapter 1, verse 1, down to verse 16.

This first section is followed by four verses (17 through 20) in which the Lord really stated His purpose, or theme, for what would follow to the end of the Sermon in chapter 7, and it is most clearly stated in verse 20.

(Read.)

This verse indicates that what follows is not only a declaration of the truth, but also that our Lord was pointing out some of the failures of the scribes and Pharisees. So the Lord was indicating that if they followed the instruction of the scribes and Pharisees, as well as the example of their lives, then they could never hope to be saved.

This led our Lord to the second section which we have just completed: the remainder of chapter 1 – verses 17 through 48. In those verses we have seen that there are six, clearly marked divisions. Each one is introduced by the Lord saying, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,” or something very similar to that, and then He followed whatever quotation He made with, “But I say unto you.” The verse divisions for this part of the message which I have already given you are:

- 1) Vv. 21-26.
- 2) Vv. 27-30.
- 3) Vv. 31-32.
- 4) Vv. 33-37.
- 5) Vv. 38-42.
- 6) Vv. 43-48, the last verse giving us the special appeal that the Lord made at the conclusion of that section.

As we move into chapter 6 the criticism of the scribes and Pharisees continued. The Lord did not mention them again as He had done in chapter 5, verse 10, but He repeated the word “hypocrites” over and over. See vv. 2, 5, and 16. And this is the word that the Lord used to describe the scribes and Pharisees *seven times* in Matthew 23 where we have the Lord’s repeated denunciations of the religious leaders of the Jews.

Now just in case there may be some of you who do not know the basic idea in the word *hypocrite*, it was a word used by both Greeks and

Romans for an actor on the stage. And actors usually wore huge masks so that you could not identify the real person while they were on stage, acting a particular part. And so eventually this word was used for a person who was pretending to be something, or someone, which he was not. And that is the way it is used by our Lord in the verses we are coming to in chapter 6. The scribes and Pharisees sought to make people think that they were more pious than they really were. They were like actors on a stage. They were pretending to be better than they were. They probably knew those words of the Lord to Samuel in 1 Sam. 16:7, but they had never made the application to themselves. I am referring to what the Lord said when Samuel was looking at Eliab, the son of Jesse, thinking that he surely must be the new king of Israel. I am referring to the Lord's words, "The Lord seeth not as man teeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7b). It is relatively easy for us to deceive each other, and even for us to deceive ourselves, *but no one can deceive the Lord!* And we had better not try!

Here again, we probably all have been guilty of some form of hypocrisy at one time or another, but it certainly is despicable in the sight of the Lord. If we are pretending to be more devoted to the Lord than we really are, or pretending to be more obedient to the Lord than we really are, we are hypocrites! We are only acting a part, but it is not a true indication of what we really are. When Saul went to the witch of Endor to find out what he should do about the Philistines, the Word tells us that "Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment." He was acting like he was not the king, and so he was a hypocrite, which he actually was!

Hypocrisy is undoubtedly one of the most common of human sins. And it is often very prevalent among people who claim to be Christians. And the more spiritual an activity is, the greater the danger that we will be hypocritical. Our Lord here mentioned three areas where the scribes and Pharisees had been hypocritical:

- 1) In almsgiving.
- 2) In prayer.
- 3) In fasting.

Today we are going to consider almsgiving. But before we get to that, let us look at the first verse of chapter 6. (Read.)

This is:

I. THE INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX (Matt. 6:1).

There is a textual problem concerning the word “alms.” There is very strong evidence from many good MSS, that the word should be *righteousness*. This would be perfectly consistent with the emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount.

You will remember that in 5:20 the Lord was speaking of “righteousness.” (Read.)

And “righteousness” fits into what the Lord was about to say better than “alms.” And I say that because there were three righteous works which the Lord was going to mention:

- 1) Almsgiving.
- 2) Prayer.
- 3) Fasting.

These are all to be righteous works, and we all should know that they can be done, not in a righteous way, but in a very unrighteous way. And they become unacceptable to God if we do them *to be seen of men*. If we are especially concerned that people know what we are doing, then our main concern is not with God. And the result is that we will not be rewarded by our “Father which is in heaven.” God rewards us only for that which is done for His glory.

I want you to notice that the Lord was teaching here that we need to be motivated by a desire for rewards, rewards from God, not from men – rewards for pleasing God, not for pleasing men. It is both an indication of our ignorance and also of our false humility for us to say that we are not interested in rewards as Christians. If we are not interested in rewards, we had better get interested. This is not so we can boast about our rewards when we stand before the Lord, but so we can know that we have spent our time here on earth seeking to glorify the Lord. What all of this means about rewards, I cannot say. But I can say that we need to live in such a way that we will get rewards.

Our Lord mentioned rewards in verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18. So they have to be very important, and they should be our main objective in all that we do.

Now the verse is a warning. It begins both in the Greek and in the English with the verb, “Take heed.” It means that we should be extremely careful, to exercise the greatest caution, that we do not perform acts of righteousness to be seen of men. We are not even to do it “before men,” that is, to wait until we are sure that people are watching. People may at times see what we do, but we are to be completely happy if no man ever finds out

what we have done because it should be that our main purpose is to please the Lord. If we want men to praise us, then that will be the only reward that we will ever get.

— So you can see that the Lord was speaking here about the condition of our hearts.

Matthew Henry mentioned that our Lord's warning against hypocrisy was an indication that *hypocrisy is a sin!* And then he added this in his comments on our text, Matthew 6:1-4;

1. We are in great danger of; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh.

2. It is a sin we are in great danger by. Take heed of hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

— In Luke 12:1 we learn that our Lord called hypocrisy the leaven of the Pharisees. This means that they were teaching it by their own practices, and that it would permeate a person's whole being once they were infected by it. We all are inclined toward it by nature, but its results can be truly devastating when it is allowed to take over in our hearts.

What the Apostle Paul told the Galatians about preaching the Gospel, applies here to what our Lord was saying. I am speaking of Gal. 1:10:
For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?
for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

And so what the Lord said in this first verse applies equally to the giving of alms, and prayer, and fasting. Now let us turn our attention to:

II. ALMSGIVING (Matt. 6:2-4).

— This was also called by our Lord, *doing their alms*. And it is implied that all of the Lord's people will feel this is a major responsibility toward the Lord because we are the Lord's people. *But what does it mean, to give alms, or to do our alms?*

It is really showing mercy to the poor. If you could see the word *alms* in

Greek, you would see that it is formed with the Greek word for mercy as a part of it. So it means giving to the poor.

— All of us who know the Lord, know that we have been the recipients of God's mercy in salvation. And so it is a part of showing our love for the Lord that we show mercy upon others – even upon our enemies as the Lord had just been saying at the end of chapter 5.

Now the first point that the Lord made about almsgiving was:

A. What they were not to do (Matt. 6:2).

— Blowing a trumpet can be taken either literally, or figuratively. Some people make so much of what they give that it is just like blowing a trumpet so that everyone will notice what they are doing. And it makes little difference whether it is in the privacy of the synagogue, or publicly in the streets. They want others to notice what they are doing, and usually how much they are giving. Our Lord said that this is what hypocrites do. What is given is certainly not to be given foolishly. And it is important for us to know that the need is genuine before we give. But when the gift is made, the giver should do it “in secret.” The Lord may have mentioned the synagogue because gifts could be made to synagogue to be distributed through that channel, just as we can give through our churches today.

The hypocrite gets paid in full by the applause of men, but he has no prospect at all of any future reward. One commentator wrote that all of the blessing that a child of God gets in this life for righteous acts that he has done, are only partial payments. The full payment awaits the day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive a full reward.

But the second part is equally important:

B. How they were to give (Matt. 6:3-4).

— “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” This means that we are to keep to ourselves what we have done in the way of giving. But even with ourselves we are not to dwell in our own hearts on what we have done. We do what we can, and are thankful that God has enabled us to do it, but then we are to forget what we have done. We to be like those the Lord referred to at the time of the judgment of the nations. We find the account in Matt. 25:31-40:

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

The work is to be done in secret; the reward will be openly, if not here, then certainly in heaven when we see how God has used us for His own glory.

Concl: Now there are certainly some important lessons for all of us in a passage like this, even as short as it is.

The first is that we need to avoid seeking our own glory. There is within our hearts a subtle desire to have the credit for whatever we do, and we often are offended if we are not recognized. This is nothing but selfish pride. And such an attitude has no place in the hearts of those of us who profess Christ as our Savior, the One Who “humbled Himself, and became obedient, even to the death of the Cross.” And the reward of the Father followed His death in that He was exalted and given a Name which is above every name, that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.’

Secondly, we need to guard against hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is the fruit of pride when we try to make more of ourselves than there really is. The Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees in these words:

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:27-28).

Hypocrisy is sin, but it breeds many other sins, and so we need to be careful about any and every tendency to make it appear that we are better than we are.

Third, let us all recognize that the greatest safeguard we have against the pride that leads to hypocrisy, is to cultivate the closest possible relationship with our Lord. There was not the slightest evidence of these or any other sins in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the more we seek to be like Him, the stronger will become our tendency to tolerate those things which someday will be rooted out of our lives altogether. Let us not try to cover up our sins, but confess and forsake them. As we do this, we are promised more and more of the mercy of God. Cf. Prov. 28:13.

And then let us thank the Lord for the opportunities we have to be a blessing and a help to others. And it is God Himself Who gives us the means to help others. What we can give is what He has given to us, and what He has given us is still really His, and is to be used for His glory. Second only to loving God, we need to love our neighbors. We can't help everyone we would like to help, but we can help some, and this we should do.

Finally, let us remember that we are to live to glorify God, and His dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And this comes down to whatever we eat, or drink, or whatever we do. And we can't glorify the Lord if we are seeking to exalt ourselves. That great benediction which the Apostle Paul pronounced on the Ephesians is one in which we see that God is able not only to make us what we are not able to be, but He also keeps us from continuing to do what is displeasing to Him. I am referring to Eph. 3:20-21:

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

REWARDS

Matthew 6:1-18

Intro: Last Sunday, in considering the first four verses of Matthew 6 in the Sermon on the Mount, I spent some time speaking about *rewards*. Since we don't usually hear very much about *rewards* I felt led to devote my message today to this important subject. I don't mean to imply that this is a new subject to most of you by any means, but perhaps I can do, as the Apostle Peter sought to do in his second epistle, "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3:1). This verb "stir up" means *to awaken you*, or *to arouse you*, to a subject in which we all should be interested. I think we all are so aware of the grace of God in our lives that we are hesitant to think that God would reward us for anything since He is the One Who works in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And I agree fully. And yet we all need to be reminded that even though our salvation is "not of works," as we are told in Eph. 2:9, yet verse 10 goes on to say,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

And it is He, not we, who has brought up the subject of rewards. So He works in us to do His will, and then He rewards us as though what we do was our accomplishment on our own. *Rewards are to be an incentive for faithfulness in every aspect of our lives – not just in what we usually think of when we speak of works, but in every phase of our lives as the verses on rewards clearly indicate to us.*

In the Sermon on the Mount we come to the subject of rewards first in chapter 5, verse 12. This speaks of a reward that we will receive when we get to heaven. (Read.)

The second time the word *reward* is used in Matt. 5:46. This seems to speak of a reward that we can have now. "What reward have ye?" It is not always clear in the passages which refer to rewards just what the reward is, or when we will get it, but we can safely leave all of that in the Lord's hands.

Some rewards are not even called rewards. For example, the promises which are attached to the Beatitudes early in chapter 5 are rewards. After all, a reward is a special blessing that the Lord gives to us. There is a sense in which answered prayers are rewards. There are many, many promises given in the Word of God which have to do with prayer. Per-

haps you remember 1 John 3:22:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

The Apostle John was saying here that if you and I earnestly seek to “keep His commandments,” the Lord will reward us with answers to our prayers. Even the act of praying has its reward. Isn’t that what the Lord promised Jeremiah?

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not (Jer. 33:3).

I don’t believe that now in New Testament times we are obligated to bring tithes to the Lord, as they did under the Law, but we have learned in the first four verses of Matthew 6 that God blesses us when we give. But the Lord gave the Israelites a tremendous promise regarding the tithe in the last book of the OT. Listen to Mal. 3:8-9:

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

But then the Lord gave them this great promise in Mal. 3:10:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

The reward for giving their tithes would mean such great blessing that there would not be room to receive it! What a reward!

Once you start to look for rewards in Scripture, you see them everywhere! God is a God Who delights in rewarding us when we seek to be and to do what is pleasing to Him!

Sometimes rewards are spoken of as crowns. James spoke of “the crown of life” in James 1:12:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

And Peter encouraged elders in their work with this promise of a reward:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

Each letter to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, are concluded with the promise of a reward to those who overcome! For example, the promise given to the church at Ephesus was this:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;
To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).

That is a reward, a great reward!

The first time a reward is mentioned in the Bible is in Gen. 15:1. Abraham had just returned from conquering the kings who had taken Lot captive, and he evidently was afraid of retaliation from them. It was at that point that the Lord appeared to him and said,

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward (Gen. 15:1).

What better reward could there be than the Lord Himself?

Usually the main idea in rewards is positive, and applies to the people of God. But there are also warnings to the wicked in the Bible, that the worst kind of disaster awaits those who persist in their sins instead of turning from their sins to seek forgiveness and eternal life from God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). And the Apostle Paul sounded the warning in his letter to the churches in Galatia, along with the promise of a reward to His people:

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-9).

We all would agree that we deserve none of the blessings that God has given us so far in our lives. Nor do we deserve the blessings that we will receive during the rest of our lives on earth. And we certainly agree that we will receive the rewards, the blessings, the crowns, that He may give us when we stand in His presence. *But we are to seek them!* And the Apostle Paul made that very clear in his first epistle to the church at Corinth.

Listen to these familiar words:

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (Cor.9:24-27)

We are to run the race which is set before us just like we are competing with everyone else. We aren't actually, but that is the idea. And just as a runner disciplines himself in what he eats, and in the sleep that he gets, and in the training he goes through, you and I should be so intent on getting the Lord's, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25: 21, 23) that it is apparent to all that the main thing we are interested in, is pleasing the Lord. We are all in this race, and we all need to be running like we would if there were only one who could win. Paul was not afraid of losing his salvation, but we was concerned about "the prize." Cf. also Phil. 3:12-14:

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now, for the rest of our time today I want us to look again at the passages in the Sermon on the Mount which speak of rewards, to see how we are doing.

I. THE REWARD FOR PERSECUTION (Matt. 5:10-12).

(Read.)

Persecution for us today in America is not what it was for the disciples. If tradition is true in their cases, then all of them suffered death because of their faith in Christ. And from the beginning of time, from Abel on,

persecution has often been very severe for the people of God. If you want to read a terrible account of the suffering of the Lord's people in the past, read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

Nevertheless, we do have persecution. It may take the form of ridicule, even for your children. It may mean that friends that you used to have, may not want to be your friends anymore. Sometimes Christians are passed over for promotions and better jobs given to others. Christians are often looked upon as bigots because they stand for the teaching of the Word of God. The world didn't love our Lord, and the world doesn't love us either, and the day may come even in our own country when persecution will take on a more active form.

But, however our relationship with the world may affect us, how do we respond? Do we feel that we are truly blessed of God if suffering for Christ's sake comes our way? Can our reaction toward trouble we have because we want to please the Lord, be described in the words, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad? Are we happy about being identified with Isaiah and Jeremiah and John the Baptist? Would we respond like the apostles did when they were beaten and told not to speak anymore in the Name of Jesus? Listen to what Acts 5:41-42 tells us about the apostles:

- 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.
- 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

I trust that none of us would do what Peter did earlier when he was confronted by our Lord's enemies, and denied with oaths that he even knew the Lord.

What kind of a grade do you give yourself on this point? Can you expect a reward? If you find the world friendly toward you, or if I do, perhaps we need to examine our lives to find out where we are failing the Lord.

Let us go on to a second point, and this is not completely separated from the first point.

II. LOVING OUR ENEMIES (Matt. 5:43-48, esp. v. 46a).

(Read.)

It really takes the grace of God to love those who hate us, and then to do them good, and even to add their names to our prayer list. Have we ever

reminded ourselves that we would do what they are doing if the Lord had not saved us? Can we pray for them as our Lord prayed for His enemies when He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:43). Do we have any right to expect a reward this kind of a reaction to our enemies toward our enemies?

Again let me say that if we find it easy to get along with everyone, maybe it’s because we are not living as the children of God should live.

III. GIVING (Matt. 6:1-4).

(Read.)

First of all, we need to ask ourselves if we give at all. Do we honor the Lord with the money He has given us? If we give, are we giving as much as we should? I mentioned the tithe a few minutes ago, and said that we are not responsible to tithe today. But let me add to that. If the Jews under the Law were *required* under the Law to tithe, we under grace should give even more. *The Lord loves a hilarious giver.* See 2 Cor. 9:7.

But the other part of this is, Do we keep what we give as a matter between ourselves and the Lord? Husbands and wives, are you in agreement with each other in this – both the giving, and to give not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing? Let the Lord decide as to how and when and where your reward will be given to you.

Does our giving make us candidates for God’s blessing now, and also in the hereafter? Read Matt. 6:19-21.

IV. PRAYER (Matt. 5:5-13).

(Read.)

We haven’t considered this section before, but you will see the word “reward” in verses 5 and 6. The mention of a “reward” indicates that they should expect a reward from praying. But the fact that they were praying to be seen of men and not because they were seeking God and His blessing, meant that that was the only reward they would get.

And this also indicates that one of the rewards we ought to be seeking is in prayer. Now many people have no reason to expect any reward because they are not praying at all. Or the praying they do is a formal prayer at the

dinner table, or a brief prayer before they go to bed, but that is the extent of their praying. So the first question we need to ask is, “Am I really praying?” And the second question is, “Do I have a closet where I daily meet with the Lord?” A closet can be any place where you can be alone to commune with God. It might be your bedroom, or your study, or your livingroom – it can be any place where you can be alone with the Lord. It needs to be a place where you are away from even your family, a place where you are alone to pour out your heart to the Lord.

James has written in his epistle that “we have not, because we ask not,” or that we “ask and receive not, because” we “ask amiss that we may consume it upon our own lusts” (Jas. 4:2b-3). The person who doesn’t ask, is not praying, and one way that we can ask “amiss” is to make sure that we are being seen of men.

All of us need to ask what our praying amounts to so we can determine if we have any reason to expect a reward for our praying.

V. FASTING (Matt. 5:16-18).

(Read.)

There will be rewards for praying, and there will be rewards for praying *and fasting!* But again, if we fast, why do we fast? Do we fast in order to be commended for our deep spirituality by our fellow-believers, or do we fast so that we can give the time to prayer that we usually give to eating? Do we fast because our burden is so great that we forego the pleasure of eating to show the Lord how much we desire an answer to our prayers.

The Pharisees made sure that their appearance indicated that they were fasting, and that was their reward. But the only one who needs to know that we are fasting is the Lord. Your husband or your wife, and possibly your children may know it. It is hard to keep such things from our family. But even then our purpose should be to have added time with the Lord.

What are the prospects that you and I will receive rewards here and now, and possibly in eternity itself, because we are fasting?

Concl: These are some of the areas where we should be seeking rewards.

We have to leave it up to the Lord as to what the rewards are –whether they are blessings that we receive now, or whether they are to be ours when we get to heaven. But I trust that you have seen that we should

be seeking rewards in order that we might bring glory to God by having His blessing upon us from day to day.

— Let me close today by giving you one more verse of Scripture. It is found in 2 Cor. 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Every day we live is an important day. It can count for eternity, or it can be wasted. May the Lord put in all of our hearts a greater desire to do what the Lord wants us to do, not so we can have the commendation of men, but so we can have the blessing of God even though people may never know what we are doing because we love the Lord, and want to please Him.

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THE SECRET PLACE OF PRAYER

Matthew 6:5-6

Intro: It has been eight weeks since I last spoke to you from the Sermon on the Mount. Little did I know, or anyone else on earth know, what was ahead for me in the weeks to come, but especially for Lucille. And at that time none of you knew what you would experience in the following weeks. It applies the same to all of us, as Solomon said so long ago, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).

The same is true of all of us for the time ahead. We never know what a day holds for us.

But we do know who knows because He has planned our lives, and the future to Him is just as clear as the past. David said in Psalm 37:23 that our very steps are "ordered by the Lord." And day by day He unfolds the outworking of His marvelous plan. David, who suffered like few men have suffered, also wrote for our encouragement,

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him (Psa. 18:30).

We often say to each other, "I don't know what I would do if I didn't have the Lord," and then we often add, "I don't know what people do who don't have the Lord."

Trials always mean testing. We discover things about ourselves that we probably never knew before. Our faith is tested. We know that we need to trust in the Lord, and yet the longer the trial goes on, the harder it is for us to trust in the Lord. We know that we need to pray, and yet we can be confused by the fact that many of our prayers are not answered.

Therefore, I feel that it is providential that when I come back to the Sermon on the Mount, I come to these two important verses on prayer. Really, they are very basic verses. We might speak of them as giving us from the mouth of our Lord Himself, *some of the basic don'ts and do's of prayer*. And yet we can't set down absolute rules for prayer because prayer is heart-work. And the Lord was indicating this by what He said. There is something very wrong with a person's heart who prays where and in such a manner that he will have the praise of men. One way we might distinguish between verses 5 and 6 is that verse 5 deals with public prayer, while verse 6 deals with private prayer. And there is no question but that

the Lord's emphasis is upon private prayer. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with public prayer, or even praying with someone else. But we need to be aware of the dangers connected with public prayer. And that is just where the Lord began in His teaching on prayer. And His opening remarks were on:

I. THE PRAYER OF THE HYPOCRITES (Matt. 6:5).

As I have said many times, the word translated "hypocrite" is the Greek word for *an actor*. An actor portrays someone he is not. And his performance has to do with what people see, and what they hear. In verse 7 of this chapter our Lord said that "the heathen ... think that they are heard for their much speaking." But that is not just true of the heathen. It is often true of pastors and others who lead in public prayer. There is a subtle temptation to draw attention to the words we are using rather than guarding ourselves against anything that would be hypocritical in the eyes of the Lord.

So our Lord warned against praying in public places (and church would be one of them) where our purpose is not to come in true humility before God to seek His blessing, but to impress the people around us as to our piety – which may not be there at all.

Another thing that we need to guard against in connection with public prayer is the possibility that that is where all, or most, of our praying is done. This is a common sin among pastors, or anyone who prays in public. There is the danger that "they love to pray," but to be seen and heard "of men," not to be seen and heard by the Lord.

Perhaps the Lord mentioned this first because He knew how prevalent this was among the Jews of His day, particularly the Jewish leaders. Their preference was to pray, either on the street corners, or in the synagogues, where they could be "seen of men." It seems that it is always true that the effectiveness of public praying always rests upon private praying, and that the person who prays publicly, but never, or very seldom, prays privately, is one whose prayers probably go without the reward of answered prayer.

Now there are many who never pray publicly, but rarely, if ever, do they pray privately, as our Lord described it in the following verse. It behooves every one of us to ask ourselves about the place that prayer, true prayer, has in our lives. But let me pass on to the second verse of my text for today.

II. PRIVATE PRAYER (Matt. 6:6).

I don't know that we have the record of any time that our Lord prayed in public. We don't even have the record of any time that our Lord prayed *with* His disciples. He took Peter and James and John with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane, but when He prayed, He left them and went farther into the Garden to pray by Himself. There might be some basis for saying that the prayer found in John 17 was prayed *for* His disciples, *in their presence*, but that is not certain. But by far when it came to prayer, the Lord practiced what He preached on the subject of prayer. Prayer to Him was a matter involving the Father and Himself *alone*!

I want to take every part of this verse, and examine each one for our instruction and edification.

First, notice how this verse begins. Our Lord said, "But thou."

At least two things are important about these two words. The first is that they are emphatic. The Lord was indicating that regardless of how others pray, and what their motives might be, you need to be careful that you pray as the Lord wants you to pray. In all things having to do with God there is always a lot of pressure to do what everyone else is doing. We find that is true today. There is a tendency among professing Christians to be very informal, and casual, and often irreverent, in prayer. There often is little awareness that we are approaching a living, eternal, holy, sovereign God. To hear some people pray you would think that God is not much higher or better than we are. As I have said before, don't learn to pray by listening to people pray, unless the people you listen to give evidence that they know the Lord and have the greatest reverence for Him. Learn to pray from your Bible, and supplement those prayers with the prayers of godly men and women. Don't succumb to the ways modern church people pray. *When you pray make sure that you pray as God wants you to pray.*

But the second point I want to make about those two words at the beginning of the verse, "But thou," is that although the Lord was talking to His "disciples" (plural – see 5:1), "thou" is singular. This meant that He was speaking to each and every disciple. No one could say, "The Lord was talking about you, but He wasn't including me." *The Lord was speaking to every single one of them just like each one was the only one who was there! And that is the way each one of us should take this verse today. The Lord did not just mean this for you, but not for me, or for the person*

sitting beside you, but not for you. This is for all of us! The KJ translators tried to help us distinguish the singular from the plural of the word *you* by translating *you* in the singular as "thou," and *you* in the plural with "ye." And that is a nicety about the KJ that you ought to recognize.

So let us take this personally today. Read this verse like it was spoken originally just for you! That is the way the Lord intended that it should be taken.

But notice that the next words to come from our Lord were, "when thou prayest." The first question this should bring to our minds is, "When do I pray?" Or, "How often do I pray?" Or, "Do I pray at all?" Oh, we all probably pray before we eat our meals, or do we? And normally Christians pray as they go to bed at night. But could we really tell the Lord that prayer has a larger place in our lives than just before our meals, or just when we go to bed at night? I have told some of you about a Russian Christian who spoke at Multnomah when I was on the faculty there. He had lunch with us after chapel. When we were all finished with our lunch, he said to us, "Would you mind if I led us in prayer?" And then he went on to explain that in Russia the Christians pray before they eat, and then they pray again after they eat. I remember what a blessing his prayer was to me on that occasion.

"When thou prayest." When do you pray, how often do you pray, and how do you pray? With everything else that you and I do in our waking hours, where does prayer come – last, or first, or practically not at all? Think about that for a moment. The Lord knows the place that prayer has in each one of our lives, but it might be that we wouldn't be very comfortable letting other people know how much we pray. The Apostle Paul said that we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). He didn't mean that we should be on our knees all of the time, but that prayer should be as natural and constant with us as breathing is. He meant that our lives should be characterized by prayer. This is another point that we all need to give attention to.

The next thing the Lord said was, "when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." When we think of a closet, we think of a place where we hang our clothes, or where we store a vacuum cleaner along with other household items. But the Lord was speaking of *a storeroom*, or of *some inner chamber* in our homes.

With the Lord it was often a garden, or a mountain. Peter found his closet

in different places. On one occasion it was on a roof top. Elijah might be found under a tree. Where is your closet? Mine is my study, or sometimes our downstairs family room. With Lucille, it is our bedroom. Perhaps that is your closet, your bedroom. We all need a place where we can pray, *and pray alone!*

However, to have a closet, and to use it, are two different things. We need not only to have *a secret place of prayer* where we can be alone with the Lord, but we need to go there, and enter, and shut the door. And those are often the most difficult things that we have to do. Life is busy for all of us. We never get everything done that we need to do, and so it is very easy to go about our business instead of heading for our closet. It perhaps is helpful if we have a certain time, or certain times, when we go to our closet to meet with the Lord. But once we are in our closet, we are to make it inaccessible to anyone else. We are there to be with the Lord, and only with the Lord. There should be times when husbands and wives pray together, and when families pray together, and when we pray with each other in church or with friends in other situations. *But the Lord was indicating here that we need to give the greatest priority to our time in our closets, alone with the Lord. This will set the tone for all other praying.*

Shutting the door often involves shutting out other things that crowd into our minds when we are meeting with the Lord in prayer. We need to do away with all distractions, by the grace of God, so that we can focus on the Lord during this special time of fellowship.

And then we are *to pray!* It is always good to read our Bibles first. This helps us to get the door shut. But it is also easy to spend our time reading, but not praying. The Lord speaks to us through His Word, and then we respond in prayer. And this is where we will find Him. "Pray to thy Father which [Who] is in secret."

Often you will here well-meaning Christians say something like this, "Oh, I pray as I am driving my car, or as I am going from one place to another. But I am just too busy to take time out of my day just for prayer." What that person is saying is that he, or she, just doesn't have time for the Lord. No person can truly pray who does not have a closet, enter it, shut the door, and talk to the Lord.

This brings us down to the last part of the verse. And, like so much that we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount, we come to another wonderful promise, and, as usual, the promise is to encourage our obedience to what

the Lord has been saying. This is the promise: "And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

The words which are translated "openly" do not appear in all MSS, but it is an interesting expression and personally I don't think that we should overlook it. It does not mean that there will be "bells and whistles" announcing that God has done something outstandingly great, but it does mean that it will be very apparent that *the Father has answered prayer*.

We have an illustration of this idea in one of David's Psalms when he was particularly exercised because of the opposition of his enemies. I am speaking of Psalm 109. The whole Psalm is well-worth reading, but the part I have reference to is in verses 26 and 27 where you have these words:

26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy:

27 That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it (Psa. 109:26-27).

For a long time when the Lord was judging Egypt in the days of Moses, the plagues were attributed to magic, but not to God. Finally the day came when the magicians of Egypt themselves told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19).

Here in our text is the firm promise that, having met the conditions, the disciples can expect to see the Father working in answer to their prayers in such a way that it will be very apparent that the Lord has done it. What He does He does in pure grace, and He does it that He alone might have all of the glory.

Concl: Doesn't this encourage you to want to get into your prayer closet, and to pray? The Lord Jesus did not say that the promise would be immediately be fulfilled, and our prayers answered. But He did promise that our prayers would be answered.

We need to see prayer answered in our nation. We need to see prayer answered in our church. And we all have burdens for which we need the Lord's answer in such a way that it will clear that it is from Him! Then let us go to our prayer closets, wherever that might be in your case, and let us enter, and shut the door, and then pray. This is a word for all of us who know the Lord. Even you young people who know the Lord, and you children, it is not too early for you to have your own prayer closet where you can go to spend time enjoying fellowship with your heavenly Father,

and where you can make your needs known to Him. Such faithful, daily praying would really mean great changes in our lives, and certain would bring blessings from the Lord which we have never experienced before. May the Lord Himself enable us to be obedient. It will always be up to the Lord to give us the blessings that He wants us to have. But may it never be true, as James taught the Lord's people in his day that they had not, because they asked not, or because they asked amiss. God is not only our God, but also our heavenly Father.

A lady in Little Rock, Arkansas wrote to me this week to inquire about Lucille, and she gave me this verse from an old hymn, and with this I close:

Say not my soul, 'From whence can God relieve my care?
Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere.
His method is sublime, His heart profoundly kind,
God never is before His time, and never is behind.

LEARNING TO PRAY IN THE SECRET PLACE

Matthew 6:7-10

— **Intro:** In considering verses 5 and 6 of Matthew 6 last week, we learned that the Lord placed a definite priority upon private prayer. It is not that public prayer is wrong, or even that it is to be avoided, but there are certain temptations facing those who pray in public. It is easy to begin to pray for the approval of people, and to forget that all true prayer is to be addressed to God, and expressed in a manner that is pleasing to God. So those of us who pray in public need to be aware of the dangers, and, by the grace of God, seek to avoid them.

Today I want to move on to verses 7 and 8. And here we have:

I. ANOTHER WARNING CONCERNING PRAYER (Matt. 6:7-8).

— Those of you who were here last Sunday morning will remember, I hope, that I spent a moment pointing out the difference between "thou" and "ye." "Thou" is singular, and that is what we have in verse 6. But in verse 7 the Lord used the plural, "ye." The emphasis in verse 6 was for each one of our Lord's disciples *individually*. But in verse 7 the Lord was addressing them as a group, and it may mean that the Lord was referring to times when they were praying together. Of course the same would apply to private prayer. There has always been the idea among non-Christian religious people that they are heard because of their "much speaking." They will repeat the same expression over and over again. It is something like we all have done as small children, asking our parents over and over again for something that we want very much. And we did this, or do this, because we think that in the end we will succeed. There are probably illustrations of this kind of praying in every heathen religion in the world.

Now again we need to be wise in understanding what the Lord was talking about. He was not saying that we should not repeat prayers that we pray. Our Lord prayed practically the same words each time He left His disciples and went into the inner part of the Garden of Gethsemane.

— Also, you will notice repetition in the Psalms. Sometimes it is the form of a refrain that may be mentioned two or three times in the Psalm, or it might be like we have in Psalm 136 where every one of its twenty-six verses concludes with, "For His mercy endureth for ever."

So the Lord was not saying that we can't repeat our prayers, not that we

cannot use the same expression over and over again. *But what He was saying was that we are not to think that this is the way that we get the Lord to answer our prayers! Nor are we to pray long prayers with that same idea in mind.* Sometimes the shortest prayers can be the most effective – like our Lord prayed from the Cross. However, at other times we may be so burdened about something that we will spend a long time in prayer.

You see, the point that the Lord was making was that while we all need to pray, yet we are not to be like a person try to make his appeal to someone, and trying to find the most persuasive words to use. What actually is the truth concerning prayer? It is this: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matt. 6:8b).

See this same idea in verse 32.

Let me take just a moment with this title that our Lord used for God, Whom we often refer to as the first Person of the Godhead. I am speaking of the term, "Father."

Here in the Sermon on the Mount we have it in:

1) Matt. 5:16, 45, and 48.

2) Matt. 6:1, 4, 6 (2x), 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 (2x), 26, and 32.

But notice that every time it is either "your Father," or "thy Father." Three times it is "your heavenly Father," and once at the beginning of the prayer which starts in verse 9, the Lord taught the disciples when praying to say, "Our Father."

Only rarely in the OT do you find God referred to as the Father of His people. But that emphasis became very strong in the ministry of our Lord, and, of course, you know how prominent it is in the rest of the NT as well. It is especially important for us to think of God as our Father when it comes to prayer. If He is our Father, and He is, then this means that we are His children; we are members of His family. Unfortunately, some people have some very unhappy memories connected with the man who is their earthly father, and it may be difficult for them to appreciate as Christians what it means that God is our Father, our heavenly Father! We should not get our idea of what fathers should be from human fathers, but from what the Bible teaches us about God as our heavenly Father.

But we need a word of explanation at this point.

It is commonly taught in many churches that we are all the children of God, that every human being is a child of God. *But this is not what the Bible teaches!* We are all God's creatures. He is the One Who formed us in our mothers' wombs, but that is not what the Lord had in mind. We are not born into God's family when we are born into this world, but we are born into the family of God when the Lord Jesus Christ saves us from our sins. Let me give you a couple of NT passages to support this.

In John 1:11-13 we have these words, speaking of Christ:

- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Actually the word "sons" in verse 12 is the Greek word for *children*. Only those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior are the children of God.

The other verse I want to give you is in the book of Galatians, Gal. 3:26, where the Apostle Paul wrote: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And there the Greek word is actually *sons*. *Sons*, of course, means *sons and daughters*. Paul was not writing to all Galatians, but to those Galatians who were trusting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Contrary to what many sincere Christians teach, we are not adopted into God's family; we are born into the family of God, and God is our heavenly Father. And He is a perfect Father, the only perfect Father there ever has been, or ever will be. And most of our progress in the Christian life can be traced to how well we understand that God is our Father. But here is one very wonderful truth about God: "'Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matt. 6:8b).

Just think about that for a moment. That is true of every child that God has. How many children do you think that God has on earth today? I don't know, and nobody but God Himself knows. But I am sure that we would be safe in saying that He has millions of children, millions whom He has brought into His family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We sometimes feel greatly outnumbered in this world, but God has His children everywhere! And He can truthfully say about all of us, "I know everything that you have need of even before you ask me to supply yours needs." Lucille and I have four children, and when they were growing up we never knew all of their needs. We knew many of their needs, but not

all of them. *But here is God with His large, large family of children which He has personally chosen, children of all ages, and He knows all of our needs, and never for one moment gets us mixed up with each other!* That is amazing truth, isn't it?

But let me ask this question: If He knows our needs, why do we need to pray about them?

I am sure that I don't know the whole answer to that question, but let me give you a couple of answers.

Perhaps the main reason is this: We need to pray because it pleases God when we come to Him, not just to have our needs met, but because we want to be with Him. And the other side of that is that He wants us to come to Him. I am sure that one reason the Lord gives us the trials we have, and the needs we have, is because that is one way He has of getting us to come to Him. You and I can't possibly appreciate how much our heavenly Father delights in our fellowship.

But a second reason is this.

As our Father, He wants us to recognize that He is the One Who meets all of our needs. We don't need to go beyond the Lord. He blesses us constantly through people, but the ultimate source of all of our blessings is our heavenly Father. And when we pray, we don't need a lot of fancy words; we don't need to feel that He is reluctant about supplying our needs. We don't need to bombard Him with the same words over and over again. He knows all about us, He knows our every need, and we can't please Him any more than when we come to Him to lay our requests before Him.

Let us always remember when we come to God in prayer, that we are coming to our Father, our heavenly Father, and He loves for us to call Him, "Father." And the amazing thing about this relationship that we have with God is that He is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! How could we possibly be blessed any more than we are? No heathen has in his religion anything that can compare with what we have since our God, the living God of heaven and earth, has condescended to claim us as His children so that we can call Him, "Father, our Father."

Now I am not going to get as far into my text as I wanted to, but let me just get us started into what is generally called, *The Lord's Prayer*.

Actually we can call it *The Lord's Prayer*, because He gave it to us, but not because this was a prayer He prayed. If you want to see the prayer He prayed, you will have to go to John 17. Only He could pray that prayer. We could take some of those requests He prayed, and pray they as well, but the prayer as a whole is *the true Lord's prayer*. This prayer which we are coming to now in Matthew 6 is:

II. THE MODEL PRAYER.

I call your attention to the word "manner" in verse 9: "After this manner therefore pray ye."

The Lord gave this prayer as a pattern for us to follow in our praying. I doubt if He intended that this be used as a prayer for people to pray the way it is used in many churches today. It can become so familiar to people that they can say it without even thinking about what they are saying. And in that way it becomes *a vain repetition*. It is probably the only prayer that many people say, people who know nothing about a prayer closet, or secret place of prayer. And I would venture to say that most people have never deliberately taken the time to memorize it; they have learned it by hearing others say it over and over again on Sunday mornings. Prayer was never meant by God just to be something which we can say by heart, but prayer is meant to be coming to God and speaking to Him from our hearts!

Luke gives us a similar account in Luke 11:1-4, but there it was given by our Lord in answer to a request which came from His disciples that the Lord would teach them to pray. Probably the first prayer that any of us should pray ought to be the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." How many of us have ever presented that request to the Lord? This undoubtedly is one of our greatest needs, and there is no great teacher of prayer than our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is not just a need we have when we first come to the Savior, but it is a need that continues all through our lives here on earth. There is always more that we need to know about prayer.

But the Lord Jesus began His lesson by saying, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father ... " In Luke's account it is reported that the Lord said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father ... "

In the providence of God we have all been placed in this world in families. Each one of us has, or has had, a father, a mother, and possibly also

siblings -- a brother or a sister, or possibly both, and perhaps even more than that.. But do you remember as parents how you waited for those first words of recognition from your child. Would that little child say "Dada" first, or "Mama"? And what a thrill it was when you heard that first word of recognition, whether it was "Dada," or "Mama."

The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 and again in Galatians 3 tells us that God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." "Abba" is Aramaic for "Father," but it is like our word "Papa" or "Dada." These are words which a child can speak before he or she has any teeth.

Now let me ask you a question. Do you suppose that the Lord lets us as parents experience such great joy when our children recognize us for the first time so that we will know that joy that fills His heart when for the first time we as His children say to Him, "Abba, Father"? The Apostle Paul also taught us that no one can call Jesus "Lord" except by the Spirit of God, and in Romans 8 and Galatians 3 we learn that no one can truly call God his Father except by the Spirit of God.

Think of all of the glorious titles you and I can use in addressing God. He is the Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the God of all the earth, the all wise God, or just simply God. But apparently there is no name that God would rather hear from you and me than simply that great name, "Father." He is my Father, your Father, our Father, our heavenly Father. Our Lord called God in John 17, "Holy Father" (v. 11), and "O righteous Father"(v. 25), and just "Father" several other times. So we can probably say that there is nothing, no Name or Title that we can use for God that brings Him greater joy than when we simply say, "Father."

Concl: Thomas Watson, one of the Puritans, wrote an entire book on *The Lord's Prayer*. And in it he pointed out ten lessons that we should learn from being able to call God, our Father. I give these to you in a brief statement for each as I close, trusting that these will find a response in each one of our hearts. Listen to what Thomas Watson said about these words of our Lord which we have been considering:

- 1) If God is our Father, "Let us depend upon Him in all our straits and exigencies; let us believe that He will provide for all our wants [needs].
- 2) If God be our Father, let us imitate Him.
- 3) If God be our Father, let us submit patiently to His will. If He lay His strokes on us, they are the corrections of a Father, not the punishments of a judge.

- 4) If God is our Father, let us cause in us a childlike reverence.
- 5) If God is our Father, let us walk obediently.
- 6) If God is our Father, let us show by our cheerful looks that we are children of such a Father.
- 7) If God be our Father, let us honor Him by walking very holily.
- 8) If God be our Father, let us love all that [who] are His children.
- 9) If God be our Father, let us show heavenly-mindedness.
- 10) If God be our Father, let us own Him as such in the worst times; stand up to His cause, and defend His truths.

And let us never forget these words of our Lord, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father ... " We have no greater claim upon His blessings than that He is our Father and we are His children, and we owe to God and to Christ and to the Holy Spirit all of the glory for such a precious relationship.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Matthew 6:9-10

Intro: We are living in days in which there is very little appreciation for the majesty and glory of God among those of us who profess to be the people of God. Reverence for the Person of God is practically unknown. There seems to be more of a tendency to deify man and to humanize God. God is often addressed in prayer as though we were on an equal basis with Him. We know so little about what it means to stand in awe of God, or to be silent before Him. Our understanding of God is not the result of searching the Scriptures, but of following the instructions of some men who are more concerned about pleasing people than they are about worshiping God "in spirit and in truth."

When the Lord Jesus said that we were to pray, saying, "Our Father," He certainly did not mean that we should treat God with such familiarity that we would forget that He is God, the God of heaven and earth, the One Who is God from everlasting to everlasting. And it seems from our text that one way the Lord sought to protect us from much that is going on in our churches today as well as in the practices of individual Christians, is seen in the fact that He not only said that when we pray, we are not only to say, "Our Father," but that we should say, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." We must never forget that while, by the new birth, He is our Father, yet He is *our heavenly Father!* And by that word *heavenly* the Lord Jesus meant that there is a great difference between God and all of the rest of us. Let us take some time today to think about those words,

I. "OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN" (Matt. 6:9m).

Last week I read to you the verses in Matthew 6 in which our Lord referred to God by the term, "Father." Let me repeat those in which our Lord combined "Father" with some form of the word "heaven."

Please look with me at 6:1, 14, 26, 32.

When we add our text, 6:9, we see that God our Father is "in heaven," and also that He is heavenly, *our heavenly Father*. Now, while the words are similar, they are not identical.

Let us take our text first, which is similar to what we see in 6:1. It tells us that our Father is "in heaven." That is His dwelling place. Heaven is

God's throne. That was made clear to Isaiah from what we read in the first two verses of Isaiah 66:

1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD ... (Isa 66: 1-2a).

But before that, what Solomon was praying for the people at the dedication of the temple he had built, no less than four times did he refer to heaven as God's dwelling place. See 1 Kings 8:30, 39, 43, 49.

When God was revealing to Isaiah the glory of His own Person, while not mentioning heaven as such, He described it in this way:

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15).

Speaking of the heavens and the earth as a part of God's creation, the Psalmist said this:

4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! (Psa. 113:4-6).

He "dwelleth on high," far above the heavens which we can see. His dwelling place is what the Apostle Paul called, "the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2). No man ever saw what the Apostle Paul saw, and he was never permitted to tell what he saw, but it was a life-transforming experience to the Apostle.

There is no question but that the fact that our Father is "in heaven" is intended to magnify the greatness and glory of our Father, and at the same time to humble us by way of the eternal contrast that there is between us and our heavenly Father. The fact that we are His children, is no reason for us to boast. He loves us, and He has chosen us, in spite of what we are. If it were not for the grace of God, God would have had nothing to do with us. *And if there is ever a time when we need to remember this, it is when we come to our Father in prayer!* In fact, Solomon gives us this word of exhortation:

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth:

therefore let thy words be few (Ecc. 5:2).

In Matt. 5:34 our Lord spoke of heaven as "God's throne." This certainly is an indication that for God to be in heaven speaks of His absolute sovereignty over all of His creation. There is not a nation nor an individual who can even begin to approach the greatness of our Father in heaven – not even all men, nations, and all other creatures combined!

But what about the word, "heavenly"? He is *our heavenly Father*.

It supports the idea that heaven is His dwelling place, His home, His throne, but it also indicates that He Himself is "heavenly." It is He Who makes heaven, heaven. He is a celestial Being. We have in this expression an indication of *the Deity of God*. While we can speak of angels as celestial beings, yet they are but creatures. Our heavenly Father is the Creator, the infinitely holy and majestic God. How incredible it is that we, sinners by nature and too often sinners by choice, should be called children of the living God.

Can't you see in all of this that we need to approach God with a deep realization of how glorious He is, and how sinful and unworthy we are by way of contrast? Our Lord was certainly teaching His disciples, and us, that we are always to approach God in prayer with a profound realization of how glorious He is, and how unworthy we are to be able to say to Him, "Our Father, which art in heaven," *our heavenly Father*."

But now let us go on to the next expression:

II. "HALLOWED BE THY NAME" (Matt. 6:9b).

That word, "hallowed," is an old English word which we don't use anymore. Actually it is a very familiar word in the Greek NT. It is the aorist imperative passive of the verb ἁγιάζω, the word *to sanctify*, or *to make holy*.

Obviously we don't make God's Name holy; it is already holy, and has always been holy. But we are to regard His name as holy. We are to have the greatest reverence for His Name. Actually the basic idea in this word *sanctify* is *to separate*. This means that we are to recognize that God's Name is distinct from all other names. There is no name like His Name. Only the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit share the glory of the Father's Name. The Lord was pronouncing the greatest judgment upon the Jews when He said to them,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).
And do you remember what the Lord said about how people were to be baptized? This is what He said to His disciples:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

As I read to you a moment ago from Isa. 57:15, God's Name is "Holy," and the only way to approach Him is with a humble and a contrite spirit. All of this is what our Lord had in mind when He said,

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.

But there are two more points that have to do with the glory of our heavenly Father.

III. "THY KINGDOM COME" (Matt. 6:10a).

It has long been recognized by those who have studied the Gospel of Matthew that in this Gospel we see our Lord Jesus Christ as a King. We know that the day will come when the Lord will reign on the earth as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

When John the Baptist came preaching, announcing the coming of the Messiah, his message was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Matthew is the only Gospel writer who spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. He also spoke of the Kingdom of God, but his use of that term was more limited. The other Gospel writers spoke of the Kingdom of God.

These terms are used in a twofold way. One has to do with the work of salvation which God is doing in the hearts of His people. Nicodemus, for example, was told that unless he was born again, he could not enter or see the Kingdom of God. So the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," has to do with the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of God's elect people. And it was for this purpose that our Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth.

But this term is used also in a literal and earthly sense. As I have already mentioned, the Lord will one day reign over all the earth. His rule will be a rule of righteousness. He will put down all other rule and authority, and will establish a righteousness Kingdom.

The purposes of God are certain, having been established in eternity past. And yet here the Lord plainly taught that we are to pray for the fulfillment of those purposes. This request is very similar to the prayer of the Apostle John which is recorded in the last chapter of the Bible where, after surveying the events which will lead up to the establishing of our Lord's earthly kingdom, and the Lord's promise, "Surely I come quickly," the Apostle John prayed, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

As the Lord taught His disciples to pray, He did not go into details with reference to the coming of the Lord. He simply taught the disciples to pray that the kingdom of God would come. This means that we are all to understand that there is only one hope for the spread of righteousness in the earth, and that is, first and day by day, through the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. But we are also to understand that there will be no world-wide peace until the Lord Jesus Christ is reigning upon the earth. If we understand this, we will not only be praying for the coming of the Lord's rule in the hearts of men, and finally upon the whole earth, but we will be living to spread the Gospel by the testimony of our lives and the witness of our lips.

In these days of so much sin and corruption in the world it is more apparent than ever that the rule of God in the hearts of men, is the only hope we have.

But closely related to this request is the request that comes at the end of verse 10:

IV. "THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN" (Matt. 6:10b).

If there is one thing that most people are not concerned about today, it is the will of God. But to think of a time when the will of God will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven among the redeemed people of God, and among the elect angels, seems to be a hopeless dream. And yet it is a great certainty growing out of the sovereign purposes of God. *Doing the will of God is the evidence in a person's life of genuine salvation.* Note what the Lord would say before His Sermon on the Mount would be

concluded. Cf. Matt. 7:21-23:

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Notice that "iniquity," or sin, is any failure to do the will of God. We as believers here on earth at the present time seek to do the will of God, but we don't do it as it is done in heaven!

Speaking of the will of God being done in heaven, David spoke of how the will of God is presently done in heaven as he concluded Psalm 103.

Listen to his words:

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul (Psa. 103:19-22).

There is a way in which the will of God is being done in the earth right now, and Nebuchadnezzar gave testimony to that many years ago when he said,

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34, 35).

But this is not what the Lord Jesus had in mind. He was thinking of a future time when the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven, not because people have to, but because they will want to – as David Brown said in his commentary on Matthew, cheerfully and constantly and

perfectly.

— Among those in heaven who do the will of God, none can equal our Lord Jesus Christ. And when He came to earth, He came with one consuming purpose in mind: to do the Father's will! And this He did without a single failure! And even now this is to be our purpose. Cf. Rom. 12:1-2.

Concl: This is as far as we will go today in dealing with this most wonderful prayer which our Lord taught. But let me ask myself and all of you if our lives today are in harmony with what we have seen in this prayer. It is wonderful to be able to call God our Father, but do we remember what it means that He is in heaven? Do we recognize the holiness of His Name, and give Him the reverence which is due to Him? And what do we consider to be the hope of the world – the Democrats? I hope not. The Republicans? I hope not! Education? I hope not. Financial prosperity? I hope not. A world with no disease? There are many things which are beneficial in their place, but only through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, and finally in the Kingdom which He will establish, will there be peace.

— And if we are praying that the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, then let us be very, very careful that today and every day our purpose is to do the will of God as He has revealed His will in His Word. Our prayers, to be sincere, must be the expression of our own hearts. It is mere hypocrisy to bring requests to God which are not the real expression of our own hearts' desire.

Closing verses: Heb. 13:20-21.

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PRAYING FOR OURSELVES

Matthew 6:11-13

Intro: We have covered some wonderful teaching in the Sermon on the Mount which, in the Gospel of Matthew, begins with chapter 5. The Lord had been telling them what He wanted them to be (the Beatitudes), and then He followed that with various instructions concerning what He wanted them to do. The teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, as well as the way they lived, had concealed the truth of God. And so there was much that the Lord needed to correct.

In our study of this great message we have gotten down to the Lord's teaching about prayer. And even on this subject the Lord had to tell them not to pray like the scribes and Pharisees did, and certainly not to pray like the heathen Gentiles did. They were not to pray to be seen by men, but each was to have a secret place where he could enjoy fellowship with God alone. Nor were they to use the meaningless repetition of words as though that would break down God's resistance so that they could get from Him what they wanted. We find all of these instructions in verses 5 through 8. They were to realize that they were approaching an omniscient God, an all-knowing God, Who knew their needs even before they came to pray.

And then in verse 9 the Lord proceeded to give them *a model prayer*. We can call it "the Lord's prayer" if we mean by that title that He gave it to them, but if we call it the Lord's prayer because we believe He prayed this prayer, then we are very mistaken. Nor does it seem that the Lord intended that this prayer should be prayed as it is. Since this prayer is used in many churches Sunday after Sunday as a part of church ritual, I believe it is safe to say that this is the only prayer that millions of professing Christians pray because many of these same people do not pray before they eat their meals. Some would argue that it is better for people to pray this prayer than not to pray at all, but that statement is very questionable. If this prayer is used just in a ritualistic and formal way, it is probably the case that the people who use it that way know very little about what true prayer is. So let us treat this as a model prayer, and seek to learn with the Holy Spirit's help, what the Lord Jesus wanted us to learn about the nature of true prayer.

We have already learned, I trust, from verses 9 and 10, that prayer is not just asking God for certain things that we need, nor what other people need, but true prayer begins with the recognition of our special relationship to God, coupled with the acknowledgment of His glory and majesty.

And then this is followed with words which show our concern for the work of God, and the will of God, upon the earth. We look forward to the day which is sure to come when the will of God will be done on earth just as it is done in heaven.

But then the Lord quickly moved on to show the disciples *how they should pray for themselves*. And this is where we are today – in verses 11, 12, and the first part of verse 13. (Read.)

Since these requests are in the plural, I would be inclined to think that the Lord indicated that these are requests also that we need to keep in mind as we pray for others. After all, what we need, is what others need. And so to pray in the right way for ourselves, is a good way to prepare to pray for others. And be sure to notice that the requests include both physical and spiritual needs. Our daily bread is a material need we have for our physical bodies while forgiveness and deliverance from temptation are spiritual needs.

Before we begin to consider these important words which our Savior has given to us, let me repeat a suggestion that I have made many times before. And it is this: *Make all of the prayers you find in the Bible your constant study and meditation*. It is certainly true that one reason the Lord has preserved the prayers we find in our Bibles, is because they can be a tremendous help to us as we seek to learn how to prayer. And remember that the Psalms are especially important for all of us as we should be continually seeking to learn more about what it means to pray according to the will of God.

But now let us take each of these requests in the second part of this prayer which the Lord gave to His disciples – *and to us!*

The first is:

I. "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD" (Matt. 6:11).

God in His Word places a special emphasis on the present day in which we are living. This does not mean that we do not prepare for tomorrow. We are not like the Epicureans whose philosophy was, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." That is a fool's philosophy, and it can lead to all kinds of sin and trouble. And yet at the same time we need to realize that for us tomorrow may never come. All that we can be absolutely sure of is that God has given us this day in which we are living.

Solomon in one of his many proverbs said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).

Do you remember the parable of a certain rich man which the Lord told, and which is recorded for us in Luke 12:16-21? Let me read it for you.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

And we can add to these words what James said on this subject:

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (James 4:13-15).

I have gone to all of these passages of Scripture to show how inclined we are to treat the future as though it were just as certain as the present, or the past. People generally take the future for granted, and often live as though they were going to be here forever.

But then the stock market takes a sudden fall. Or a job which was thought to be secure comes to an end. Or sickness abruptly strikes us, and the future is completely changed.

Here in the US we are surrounded with an abundance of food, and we do not think in terms of looking to the Lord for our "daily bread." We get paid by the month, or by the week. Some are paid by the day. But we are inclined to think that with our money in hand, we are secure until the next

pay day comes around. It would be interesting to know how many of us have the practice of praying for each day's supply of food.

— What was the Lord seeking to teach His disciples when He taught them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Bread, of course, was the staple food of that day, but the expression applied to all of their food.

This is obviously a morning prayer. The Lord was teaching His disciples that God, their heavenly Father, provided for His children, and He did it on a daily basis. And so He was teaching them their daily dependence upon the Lord for the food which they needed. After all, daily food is important for all of us. And we have many other daily physical and material needs. God is the One Who supplies them all, and it is good for us to remember this every morning, and to pray for the Lord's provision for each day. Your freezer and your cupboards may be full, but still it is the Lord Who supplies. And there isn't anyone who doesn't suddenly wake up if the supply of food on any day is cut off.

But let us move on to the next request.

— II. "AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS" (Matt. 6:12).

Verses 14 and 15 of this chapter seem to indicate that what the Lord had in mind when He spoke of "debts," was *sins*. In Luke's account of this prayer, he used the word "sins." This is the way Luke expressed it: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

Just yesterday I was reading in Mark 11, and I came across these two verses: 25 and 26. This is what they say:

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

— This does not mean that we are forgiven of our sins because we forgive others who have sinned against us. We are forgiven because of the blood our Lord shed when He died on the cross for our sins. But it does mean that we cannot truly confess all of our sins if we are unwilling to forgive that person who in some way, or any way, has sinned against us. How often we come to our heavenly Father confessing our sins, and yet at the same time we are unwilling to forgive some other person who has sinned

against us. To harbor an unforgiving spirit against someone else is itself sin. The remembrance of our own sins, and God's gracious forgiveness, should make us even more willing to forgive others who sin against us. That seems to be clear from our Lord's words.

But let me follow along another line. How consistent are we about confessing our sins? The only way we can remain sensitive to sin is by the daily exposure of our hearts to the Word of God. It is only as we walk in daily fellowship with our Lord that we are made conscious of how sinful we are in our hearts. And we usually will come to the conclusion when we consider how others have sinned against us, that their sin has not been nearly as bad as our sins have been against our heavenly Father. Thus, the acknowledgment of our sins is one of the great instruments which our heavenly Father uses to humble our hearts before Him.

But let us go on to the third petition in this series and last petition in this series..

III. "AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL" (Matt. 6 13a).

It is probably more accurate that the latter part of this verse be translated, "But deliver us from the Evil One." The definite article "the" is in the Greek text.

How are we to understand the first part of this verse in the light of what James has written in James 1:13-15?

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

God tries us, as He tried Abraham when He called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Often we sin when we are being tried, but it is not because God makes the temptation too great for us; it is because of the sin that is in our hearts, as verse 14 above explains. God has given us the promise that we have in 1 Cor. 10:13:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to

escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Our Lord's teaching that our heavenly Father would not lead us into temptation and ultimately into sin, means that God would so graciously watch over us that He would not permit us to be overcome by temptation and sin. If the Lord is to withdraw His restraining hand from any one of us at any time, there is no telling what we would do. And this is where we all need to be very, very careful. If we are want to be kept from sin, then we must never put ourselves in a position where we might be overcome by sin and by the Evil One. We cannot afford to play with temptation and sin. As surely as we do we will be overcome. That same passage which gives us 1 Cor. 10:13 which I have just read to you, also gives us in these words in the verse just before it,

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Every day we live we need to beware of the Evil One. He will take advantage of us in any way that he can. He seeks our downfall. He knows our weaknesses. He is not greater than our heavenly Father, but he is greater than we are.

"The Evil One" as a title for Satan indicates that the effect of his work is always bad. The Devil always leaves people worse than they were before. When he makes sin appear to be beneficial to us, it is only to deceive us. The place to learn the truth about Satan and his work is the Word of God. There we have the Devil exposed for what he is. We are engaged in a constant warfare with him, and that is why we need to put on the whole armor of God as the Apostle Paul instructed us to do in Ephesians 6. There can be no compromise with sin. And we must strongly and consistently love righteousness and hate iniquity, even as our Lord did. Our struggle every day is with sin within our own hearts, as well as all of the sin that is in the world around us. And it is only as we are fortified by the whole armor of God, being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, that we will be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

Concl: So what does this section teach us about the way we should be praying for ourselves, and for others?

It teaches us to recognize how utterly dependent we are upon God for our daily needs, right down to the food that we eat. And that it is right and proper that, at the beginning of every day, we should pray that the Lord would give us our "daily bread." And if we do this about our food, then it would follow that we should look to Him *daily* for all of the other physical and temporal needs that we have.

I was not quite a teenager at the time of the Great Depression. But I never worried about whether or not we would have food to eat or clothes to wear. Why didn't I? Was it because my folks were not concerned about my Dad's job? I didn't know until I was grown that from day to day my Dad did not know how long he would have a job. But he never let us, his children, know how big the trouble was that he was facing. We trusted him completely, and that is exactly how our heavenly Father wants us to trust Him.

Secondly, we need to be faithful in confessing our sins to our heavenly Father. This, too, needs to be daily. We want to be extremely careful that we live to please our heavenly Father. And, at the same time, we need to manifest grace toward those who may wrong us, remembering how much the Father has had to forgive us – and so we forgive those who have sinned against us.

Finally, we need to pray against sin each day. Confess the sins we have committed, but pray for deliverance from sin this day, and in all coming days.

There are obviously other things that we need to pray for as we think of our relationship with our heavenly Father, but these are some of our most basic needs. And so let us take these to heart, and act upon them. It is in obeying the Word of God that we will experience our heavenly Father's greater blessings, and this also is the path that leads to greater and greater usefulness in this world of sin where people live as though God does not exist at all.

THREE ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER

Matthew 6:13b-18

Intro: We would all agree, I am sure, that there never was, and never will be, a teacher like our Lord Jesus Christ. He taught the truth on whatever subject he was speaking. Much of His teaching had to do with prayer. This not only shows the importance of prayer, the outstanding importance, but it shows that we would never know how to pray without His instruction. And yet people talk about prayer as though they know how to pray without any instruction. That is another illustration of where our pride will take us. If we all knew instinctively how to pray, the Lord would never have given such teaching as we have here in Matthew 6 and in many other places in the Gospels where He spoke on prayer. So it is important for us, as it was with our Lord's disciples, to learn from our Lord *how to pray!*

In this very familiar prayer given by our Lord, we learn how to address God, we learn how to exalt Him in prayer, and how to pray for the fulfillment of His purposes and for the accomplishment of His will on earth just as it is done in heaven.

Then we learn from this prayer that we have both physical as well as spiritual needs, and that these need to be present to the Lord in prayer. When we do this we show out utter dependence upon Him.

And then the prayer ends much in the same way that it began: with the Lord! "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

As we saw last week, we learn from this prayer a little about how we need to be praying for ourselves, and for each other.

Depending upon how we choose to divide the requests, there are either six or seven requests in this prayer. Let me point them out to you:

- 1) "Hallowed be Thy Name.
- 2) "Thy kingdom come."
- 3) "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."
- 4) "Give us this day our daily bread."
- 5) "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
- 6) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," or *from the Evil One.*

Some might choose to make this last request into two requests. But

however you might divide them these are the requests.

Today I want to take up the last part of verse 13, which concludes the prayer, and then move on secondly to verses 14 and 15, concluding with verses 16, 17, and 18.

I have chosen to call this, *Three Essentials of Effective Prayer*. They are not the only essentials, but they are three. And they are *worship, forgiveness, and fasting*.

Let us look at the latter part of verse 13 first, which is actually the conclusion to the prayer.

I. WORSHIP (Matt. 6:13b).

Those of you who are using one of the more recent translations will tell me that these words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen," is not in your Bible. The NASB includes it, but has put brackets around the words. The original ASV does not include it in the text, but has a footnote saying, "Many authorities, some ancient, but with variations, add, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*" The NIV omits it with a similar explanation. Many of the commentaries ignore it. One commentator made the statement, "There is no reason to suppose that this doxology was spoken by Christ" (Maclaren, Vol. 4, p. 289). Citing textual studies he then went on to say that "the doxology has no business here" (*Op. cit.*, p. 290). *But then he went on to expound its meaning saying, that just because Christ did not speak these words, is no reason why we can't use them in our prayers.* I personally find it very difficult to accept that kind of an attitude.

In the first place, what authority does he have for saying that our Lord never spoke these words? And secondly, where is it going to lead us if we say that He didn't, but we can. Obviously we use words in prayer which our Lord may never have used, but I believe it is a serious thing to eliminate words from Scripture, saying that the Lord didn't use them, but we can. No one can truthfully say that our Lord never used them. There certainly is nothing in them that would be inconsistent with the teaching of our Lord. And it truly does seem that without these words, the prayer would be incomplete.

So without engaging in a question that is more for godly scholars to handle, I want to include these words in my attempt to explain the mean-

ing of the this prayer which the Lord has given us: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Amen."

A. "The kingdom" (v. 13).

We had this word in the second request given by our Lord in the prayer. See it in verse 10: "Thy kingdom come." We know from the way this word is used throughout Scripture that it has to do with salvation and God's work in our hearts, but it also has to do with a literal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only on earth, but in heaven. So for the Lord to say, "Thine is the kingdom," is to recognize that there would be no salvation, there would be no increasing sanctification in our lives, there would be no fulfillment of God's purposes for heaven and earth, *if the work were not His!* None of what God is doing on the earth today was man's idea. Man did not devise the way of salvation. Man did not plan the sanctification of sinners. Man did not come up with the idea of a new heaven and a new earth where we would have perfect righteousness. *All of this originated with our heavenly Father. The kingdom is His! The work is His! And it is important that we continually recognize this when we come to God in prayer.*

B. "The power" (v. 13).

When you look in Scripture at the work that needs to be done in all of our hearts, and even in this corrupt world in which we live, and then place beside this in our thoughts what the Bible says about the end times, how thankful we can be that the power to accomplish the work that needs to be done in our hearts, and the work which needs to be done among the nations of the earth, it is very reasonable for us all to ask, "How will it ever be?"

There is only one answer. It is not in you and me. It is not in the combined efforts of all of the people of God in any generation. *The power to accomplish what God has ordained to be done, is to be found in God alone!* If it were left us to man, it all would have been abandoned long ago. Thank God we can say, "Thine...is the power!" This is our assurance and our lasting hope. Isn't this the truth that the Apostle Paul was teaching in Phil. 2:12 and 13 when he wrote,

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do

of his good pleasure.

Our Lord used a different word for "power" in the last three verses of the Gospel of Matthew, but the truth is the same. Let me remind you of what those word are:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

And you will remember that when our Lord was speaking to His disciples shortly before His death about fruit bearing, He pointed out how absolutely necessary it is for us to *abide in Him* because, as He said, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5b).

So what we say about the kingdom, and the power, applies equally to our heavenly Father, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The work is Theirs, and the power is Theirs. It is not our work, nor our power, but God's work, and God's power – the power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And so it is not surprising that our Lord said finally,

C. "The glory" (v. 13).

Since the kingdom is His, and the power is His, then it must follow that the glory is His. And the glory is His, not just when the work is done, but the glory is His every day as we see the evidence of His work in each of us as well as in this world in which we live. And it will be eternally true, forever, that the kingdom and the power and the glory are God's! And we can all conclude with a hearty, "Amen!" *May it ever be! So let it be!*

This is a verse that we all need to repeat every day in prayer. This is our hope and our glorious prospect that the great things that according to Scripture we look forward to, will certainly come to pass.

But I must hurry on to my second point.

II. FORGIVENESS (Matt. 6:14-15).

In these verses the Lord went back to deal with the one part of the request

where we all would probably have the most trouble: *the matter of forgiving those who have sinned against us*. It is the fifth request in the prayer: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

If you stop to think about this, I think you will have to agree that this is a greater problem with all of us than we are at first inclined to think that it is.

Let us think for a moment about our need for forgiveness. Many, many years ago Solomon, in writing the book of Ecclesiastes, had this to say:

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not (Ecc. 7:20).

Now you can take this as applying to a person who can be called "just" because he always tries to do the right thing. He obeys the laws of the land. He is faithful to his wife, and to his children. He pays his bills. He tells the truth. On a human level he can be described as *a just man*. But Solomon would have us know that the best just man that you could find still is a sinner. There are no perfect people on earth.

But what if we take this of one who is just in the sight of God, a Christian, a child of God. Unfortunately for us, this is still true. The most godly person on earth still sins. He may not sin to the same extent, or as often as others do, but he still sins! And since we all have sinned, and sin is against God, what do we need? We need divine forgiveness. In the final analysis, there is no one who can forgive sins but God. The scribes of Israel, not believing that Jesus was God, criticized him for forgiving the sins of the palsied man saying that God was the only One Who could forgive sins. See Mark 2:7. And they were right. There is not a day that we do not sin by doing something that we should not do, or by failing to do what we ought to do. Or we fail by saying what we should not say, or by failing to say what we ought to say. Or we fail by thinking what we ought not to think.

Solomon in one of his proverbs said, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20:9). The answer to that question is that no one can say that. Man can do a great deal to reform himself, but he never does a perfect work. He continues to be a sinner. You and I who know the Lord still sin. And I trust that this is to our great alarm and concern. We were forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ when we were first saved, and we continue to need the cleansing of Christ's blood as we sin from day to day. And often we come to the Lord confessing the same sins, much, I trust, to our grief.

What happens when we confess our sins? The Lord not only forgives us and forgets our sin, but He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. See 1 John 1:9.

But what about people who have sinned against us? Let me remind you of a word the Apostle Paul gave to the church at Ephesus when he wrote to the church there. Here are his words:

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:30-32).

The sins mentioned in verse 31, "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking," all speak of resentment a person holds against someone who has sinned against him. But instead of being overcome with these sins (which are the fruit of an unforgiving spirit), you and I who know the Lord need to be "kind ... tenderhearted, forgiving one another ... " Why? Because that is how the Lord has treated us. So you can see that an unforgiving spirit does not stand alone, but always is fed by other sins which are unbecoming to those of us who know the Lord.

In Psa. 66:18 we read, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" To "regard iniquity" is to see that it is there, to be fully conscious of what it is, and yet not do anything about it. People often live for years with an unforgiving spirit, and wonder why the blessing of God has departed from their lives. Let us not be that way, but even though people may not ask to be forgiven, before the Lord let us forgive them, and then we can be at peace.

But now to our last section which has to do with:

III. FASTING (Matt. 6:16-18).

What is fasting? Thayer in his Greek Lexicon gives this definition of fasting:

To abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink: either entirely, if the fast lasted but a single day, or from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days

In other words fasting means to go without food for a day, or even for just

one meal, in order to give more time for prayer. It is an expression of a person's great burden for some special need.

We don't hear much about fasting in these days, but it continues to be important to the Lord. Notice that the Lord did not say, "If ye fast," but "when ye fast." These verses sound very much like what our Lord had to say about prayer. This, too, had been corrupted by the "hypocrites," *the scribes and Pharisees*. See Matt. 23:14-15, 23, 25, 27, 29. As with prayer, the scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites because they prayed and fasted to be seen and commended by men. That commendation was their reward.

It is impossible to know how much fasting is practiced by the Lord's people today because it is a private matter between people and the Lord. Men and women in past years who have walked closely with the Lord often fasted and prayed for the blessing of the Lord.

We have several illustrations of prayer in Scripture.

About the first one had to do with the time when a Levite had a concubine who left his house for four months, and became a harlot. He went after her because she had gone to her father's house. On their way home they passed through Gibeah, a city of Benjamin, and there were men in the city who were homosexuals. The Levite stayed in the house of an old man in Gibeah. After dinner many men from the city came and demanded that the old man turn the Levite over to them for sin. The old man pled with them not to demand such a thing, but he gave them his own daughter and the Levite's concubine. They abused the concubine all night, and in the morning she died from the abuse. The Levite notified all Israel of what had happened, and they gathered together to make war against the people of Benjamin. Twice Israel was defeated even though they had sought the will of the Lord about going against Benjamin. After their second defeat we read this:

26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

27 And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days (Judges 20:26-27)).

The Lord responded to the people, and the next day when the Israelites went against Benjamin, Benjamin was defeated. So the people, in their

despair, fasted and prayed, seeking the blessing of the Lord, and it came.

To cite an example from the Gospels, you probably remember that when the Lord and Peter and James and John came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, they were confronted by a man who had brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples, but they could not drive the demon out. After the Lord delivered the child, and the disciples had the Lord to themselves, they asked, "Why could not we cast him out?" And this is how the Lord answered them:

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:20-21).

This does not mean that the Lord always answers prayer when it is accompanied by fasting, but the blessing of God does come when the Lord's people show such faith.

Acts 10:30 tells us how Cornelius fasted and prayed that the Lord would somehow let him know how he could be saved. And you remember how Peter came to his house and preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends.

When Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey, we read this in Acts 13:2 and 3:

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So fasting was often a part of the ministry of the Gospel.

In our text fasting is obviously for the purpose of prayer. It was never to be extended, most of the time no more than a day, as Paul mentioned in 1 Cor. 7:5. But it was commonly practiced in the early church. And our Lord promised that it would bring blessing, as He said in verse 6 of our chapter, about prayer.

Concl: Let us take these words to heart, worship, forgiveness, and fasting.

Undoubtedly they can mean greater blessing for us all as we pray the way the Lord taught His disciples to pray so long ago.

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY TREASURES

Matthew 6:19-24

Intro: The Apostle Paul made a very revealing statement about money in his first letter to Timothy. You will find it in 1 Timothy 6, verses 9 and 10. Most of you are very familiar with what Paul said. This is his statement:

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice that he did not say that *money is the root of all evil*, but that "the love of money is the root of all evil," *all kinds of evil*. That is a most amazing statement, and we all can cite illustrations of what Paul said.

By the standards of life which characterized the life of our Lord as well as His disciples, most of us would be considered wealthy. One of our biggest problems in America is our high standard of living. None of us can consider ourselves exempt from the danger of making money the major part of our lives. In fact, from what the Apostle Paul said in the verses which I have just read to you, money was a great problem to those who professed to know the Lord in Bible times. In the latter part of verse 10 the Apostle Paul said, "Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

When money is anyone's chief object in life, this can lead to all kinds of evil, as the Apostle Paul said. His words were written originally as a warning to Timothy not to be deceived by "the love of money." So we all need to be careful. This is not an indictment of rich people because you don't have to be wealthy by our standards today, to be gripped by a love for money. The love of money has led to the commission of practically every crime in the books.

Even in the situation that we face in our country today, if the polls mean anything, they indicate that a majority of Americans will close their eyes to many things that are sinful in God's sight as long as our economy gives them the things that they want. A decline in the stock market is big news, but who cares that we are a nation that has turned away from God and all that is holy and good and righteous in His sight. Those of us who know the Lord need to be on our guard constantly against this great evil: "the

love of money."

Now, as always is the case, the Lord not only pointed out the danger of just laying up for ourselves treasures upon earth, but He also told us the remedy if we have fallen into this trap, and the same words give us the truth that will keep us from being destroyed by it. So let us turn to our text, and examine the words which our Lord gave to His disciples almost two thousand years ago, words which are just as true and just as needy today as they were then.

He spoke of:

I. EARTHLY TREASURES (Matt. 6:19).

When the Lord spoke of laying up treasures, He was not condemning thriftiness, nor was He saying that it was wrong to make money. Even some of the Lord's parables encouraged the proper investment of money. It is good to make plans for the future as long as those plans are not extravagant.

But what our Lord was condemning was the person who lives for the purpose of making money. Money is necessary for all of us. However, the desire for money, and more money, and more money, has ruined many a life. Divorces are often the result of a man's desire to make money. He will neglect his wife and his children for the sake of money, not realizing when he does that he is paying a great price for the way he has chosen to go. And often he has to number his children among the casualties in his life.

Besides, there is nothing secure about money. Solomon had a word about riches, and we need to remember that he was one of the richest men who ever lived. Listen to his words found in Prov. 23:4-5:

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

He also said,

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent (Prov. 28:20).

When two brothers were having trouble over an inheritance, and one of them came wanting the Lord to settle their differences, the Lord said to him,

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:14-15).

The tragedy with most people today is that they know practically nothing about the Scriptures. All of us could be spared a lot of experiences that bring us unhappiness instead of happiness if we only paid closer attention to the Word of God.

In our Lord's words in our text He pointed out a couple of reasons why riches alone do not bring happiness. First, because things get old, and sometimes are ruined just by the passing of time. Moths and rust do their damage. And if not, "thieves break through and steal." So you never know how many different ways you can lose what you have.

Much more could be said about following earthly treasures, but now let us look at what the Lord said by way of protecting us from making such tragic mistakes.

II. HEAVENLY TREASURES (Matt. 6:20-21).

I don't believe I am underestimating the need for these verses in our society today when I say that the majority of people do not give a single thought about the possibility of heavenly treasures. They live just for this life, and make no preparation for life after death. Parents will do all that they can to give their children security for the future, but the same parents will never talk to their children about God, or righteousness, or heaven. And the reason is because they don't know anything about heavenly treasures, and if they do, those things are just not important for them.

Perhaps one reason the Lord got into this subject in His Sermon on the Mount was because He had just spoken about rewards – rewards for giving alms, or rewards for praying, or rewards for fasting. One reason that people are not interested in the things of the Lord, is because they don't want the trouble which often goes with it. And yet earlier in this sermon our Lord had this to say. You will find these words in Matthew 5, verses 10-12. (Read.) Notice the words in verse 12 especially.

Let me give you some other passages in which we are encouraged to seek heavenly treasures. One of these is found in 2 Cor. 4:17 and continuing on

through 5:1:

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 4:17-5:1).

Paul actually contrasted the lives of those who are concerned only about earthly things with those whose concern is for heavenly things when he wrote to the believers in Philippi. Listen to his words:

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:17-21).

And then let me remind you of Col. 3:1-4:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Going back to the words of our Savior, you will remember that He spoke these words:

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoso-

ever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:34-37).

The biggest mistake a person can make in this life is to be so concerned about this life that he fails to make preparation for the life to come.

We don't hear much about worldliness in our churches any more. And yet this is the cause for the lack of power in our lives and the lack of power in our churches. Too many of us are trying to straddle the fence between the church and the world. Again quoting Bishop Ryle where he said in his commentary on Matthew's Gospel,

Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It is no wonder that we find our Lord speaking strongly about it: it is an insidious, specious, plausible enemy; it seems so innocent to pay close attention to our business! It seems so harmless to seek our happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins!—Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They "lay up treasure on earth," and forget to "lay up treasure in heaven." May we all remember this! Where are our hearts? What do we love best? Are our chiefest affections on thing in earth, things in heaven? Life or death depends on the answer we can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Matthew*, p. 56).

A few moments ago I read to you about two brothers who were having trouble over their inheritance. The Lord warned them by telling them that their lives did not consist in the abundance of things which they possessed. And then the Lord told them a parable which I read also to you in a recent message, and I want to read it to you again, noting especially what the Lord said in conclusion. Here is the parable:

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

On the other hand, the one who is rich toward God, the one to whom the riches of earth are as nothing compared with the riches we have in God in heaven, will have heaven in his heart. This is the way Alexander Mac-laren expressed it, "If our hearts are in heaven, then heaven will be in our hearts" (Vol. 4, p. 309).

But now notice what the Lord said about our eyes.

III. OUR EYES ARE GAUGES OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE (Matt. 6:22-23).

When the Lord began to speak about the eye, it was as though He was asking His disciples, "Where are you looking?" They would be looking where their hearts were – either upon earth, or upon heavenly things. You will remember, I trust, that a few minutes ago I read to you from 2 Cor. 4 where the Apostle Paul said in verse 18,

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Obviously if we are talking about earthly things, our hearts are upon them, but so are our eyes. If we are laying up treasure in heaven, we look at them with the eye of faith, guided by the Word of God. The person who has clear, healthy vision (the meaning of "single"), his whole body is full of light. It puts everything else in perspective. But the person who only has an eye for earthly treasures, is a person who has an "evil" eye, meaning either diseased or altogether blind. And consequently his whole body is full of darkness. Everything is wrong; nothing is right! And if he happens to be a person who has had some exposure to the light of the Word of God, and then turns from it, his light becomes greater darkness than if he had never had the light.

Every child of God who is seeking those things which are above, who has set his heart on heavenly treasure, seeking to be rich toward God, can say,

"Once I was blind but now I see." On the other hand, the person who lives only for earthly treasure is a person who is spiritually blinded, meaning that he cannot see. And that is the state of countless millions in the world today. And unfortunately, many are in our churches.

Our text for today concludes with a statement from our Lord which we can call:

IV. TWO TOTALLY INCOMPATIBLE MASTERS: GOD AND MAMMON (Matt. 6:24).

"Mammon" is an Aramaic word for wealth, and it is usually related to greed, avarice. No person can live for money and still be living for God. A person can have a lot of money and still live for God but it is only because God is first in his life, not making money. The person who tries to serve both will soon find that he is the servant of mammon. It is only when God is given first place in all things, that "the love of money" goes away.

Here is another wonderful revelation from God. And how blessed we will be if we take the Lord at His Word instead of finding out that He was right only after we have spent our lives in pursuit of that which will rob us of heaven and salvation.

Concl: The big question for each one of us to answer is, Which direction are we headed? Are we headed after earthly things, or do we have healthy spiritual sight so that our hearts are set on things above where Christ sits today at the right hand of the Father? Don't try to straddle the fence between the Lord and the world. It is inevitable that you will fall on the world's side if your heart does not really belong to the Lord.