

Living the Righteous Life

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 6:1-4

Chapter six can be divided into two sections: first, our devotion to God (our piety, inward moral righteousness, our heart) (1-18), and second, our example before the world emphasizing our outward righteousness (19-34).

Martin Lloyd-Jones says of Matthew 6, “*There is no chapter which is more calculated to promote self-humbling and humiliation than this particular one.*” In verse 1, the Lord introduces the next part of His sermon. His statement sets the tone for the next section. In Matthew 5:21-48, we have seen what we believe about the law. In this section, Jesus focuses on the practice of the law. He does this with three examples: living righteously (2-4), prayer (5-15), and fasting (16-18).

I. The Overview (Matthew 6:1)

A. The Danger of False Righteousness

1. The Warning

- a) Beware (*Proschō*)—Be on guard (exercise caution, pay attention). Believers must be on guard against pride and confidence in their religious activities.
- b) Righteousness—translated in some versions as “alms.” Righteous acts, attitudes, and character. It could be any act of mercy or pity, but it is primarily used about giving money, food, or clothing.
- c) To be seen by men (other people) (*Theaomai*) – show off; to be a spectacle; a theater scene, not real life; acting; a performance.
- d) “...no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”
(1) We have guaranteed rewards from the one we intended to please.

2. The Examples

- a) Cain – gave an outward appearance of worship by offering a sacrifice God did not want. When this was revealed, Cain killed his brother (Gen 4:5-8)
- b) Absalom – hypocritically vowed allegiance to his father, King David, while plotting to overthrow his kingdom (2 Samuel 15:7-10)
- c) Judas – betrayed Christ with a kiss the night before His crucifixion.
- d) Ananias and Saphira – claimed to give all the proceeds from the sale of the property but hypocritically held back a portion (Acts 5:1-10)

B. The Principles

1. Our Balance: The Christian life is a delicate balance; avoid extremes.

- a) To let our Light shine? We were told to live so that others see our good works (**Matthew 5:16**, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*).
- b) To be seen? Then we are told shortly after (**Matthew 6:1**, *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”*)
- c) Is there a contradiction? No, we are to do both. We are not to be monks, nor are we to be flashy and pretentious. The Purpose is different (glory to the Father/to be seen by them (men))
- d) We live out our lives before the face of God with the singular goal of glorifying Him. In living in this manner, others will glorify the Father.

2. Our Audience: The Christian life is always a choice between pleasing God or pleasing self.

- a) Recognize that in “pleasing men,” we seek to please ourselves.
- b) Seek the praise of God rather than the cheers of men.

3. Our Relationship: Living before the face of God.

- a) As Christ sought to live for His Father, so should the believer.
- b) Live every day in the sight of God (not as the Pharisees who sought to justify themselves before men) This is a heart matter.

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- (1) **Jeremiah 23:24**, *Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.*
 - (2) **Psalms 139:7**, *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*
 - (3) **Jonah 1:3**, *But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.*
 - (4) **Hebrews 4:13**, *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
 - (5) **Proverbs 15:3**, *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*
 - (6) **Job 34:21**, *“For his eyes are on the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps.*
4. Our Reward: Rewards are guaranteed; we decide on the source.
 - a) **Matthew 6:1 (ESV)** — 1 *“...for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*
 - b) **Matthew 6:2**, *“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*
 - c)

II. The Reward of False Giving. (Matthew 6:2)

- A. **When** you give, sound no trumpet as the hypocrite. (When – indicates expectation to give)
 1. A hypocrite is an actor. Someone wearing a mask. It is pretending to be someone you are not.
 - a) Nonbelievers acting as Christians.
 - b) True believers pretending to be spiritual when living in known sin.
- B. When you give, seek not the praise of others.
 1. Seeking men’s blessing, accolades, and honor forfeits God’s.
 2. Congratulations, you have your name on a building.
- C. The praise of men is the reward of false giving

III. The Reward of True Giving (Matthew 6:3-4).

- A. Jesus expects our giving to be normal. (Be discrete, be direct, and move on)
 1. Giving (alms) should result from a generous heart (Proverbs 19:17).
 2. Giving should sometimes be sacrificial (Mark 12:41-44).
 3. Giving has no relationship to what a person has (Luke 16:10)
 4. Giving (material things, money) correlates to spiritual blessing (Luke 16:11-12, 6:38)
 5. Giving is a personal matter (2 Cor 9:7; 8:1-2)
 6. Giving is a response to a need (Philippians 4:15-18)
 7. Giving is a demonstration of love (from a glass of water to great riches)
- B. Not all good works are to be done in secrecy
 1. **Psalms 106:3**, *Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!*
 2. **Isaiah 58:2**, *Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.*
 3. **1 John 2:29**, *If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*
- C. Our purpose and motivation matter
 1. **Matthew 5:16**, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
 2. A few takeaways
 - a) We are to show when tempted to hide; and hide when tempted to show.
 - b) If we remember, God will forget; but if we forget, God will remember.
 - c) Watch ourselves so that we do not become one who pretends to give while intending to receive.
 - d) Be careful not to value symbolism over substance (Matthew 23:1-7)