

—J.C. Ryle *Expository Thoughts on Matthew* || Matthew 6:1-15—

- I. This passage is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount, dealing with two acts of worship, giving and prayer.
  - A. Giving and Prayer aren't always considered in the same sentence, but there are many similarities that Christ brings out in this teaching. Both are true acts of worship required by God, and both are public and private.
  - B. So what's the problem? The problem is we are sinful, and we twist these acts of worship for selfish gain or attention. We take acts of worship of God and turn it into worship of self. This can be hard to see in ourselves.
- II. Ryle makes several observations about this passage:
  - A. The Lord takes it for granted that all who call themselves his disciples, will give alms. V2.
    1. It's a given that each disciple will consider it a solemn duty to give according to their means, to help the needs of others. This is an assumed command, not a conditional phrase. Christ teaches us the manner in which we should give. This includes giving to the church, the deacons fund, and other needs as they arise.
    2. Christ does not declare how much we should give, or how often, only that we must give, and we must do it with the proper heart. The danger is not in giving too much or too often, but too loudly.
  - B. In giving, everything like ostentation is to be abhorred and avoided.
    1. We are to give in secret, avoid any show, and give all glory to God. As a church, we take this very seriously. We strive to ensure anonymity and insulate the leadership from knowing who gives what.
    2. Christ uses the imagery of a trumpet to demonstrate this truth in v.2. Sounding a trumpet would be to call attention to ourselves, but there is also a literal meaning, considering the method of giving at the time.
    3. In summary: if we call ourselves a Christian, we must give, according to our means, secretly, so that we have no boast, giving all glory to God for both the blessing and the gift. For it is out of love for God and the gift of his son that we give at all. We must give with a heart that reflects this love from the Father.
    4. Application: Take giving seriously and give intentionally. Some suggestions – be subtle, conceal the amount you give, be prepared to give, be in prayer for the giving, and practice joy in giving.
  - C. Our Lord takes it for granted that all who call themselves his disciples will pray.
    1. This is another assumed command regarding private prayer in our lives. Jesus is not condemning occasions of public prayer. The directive here is that wherever else we might pray; we must pray in private. It is not enough to participate in prayer in church on Sundays, or to pray before meals.
    2. *It is not enough to join in the prayers of the congregation on Sundays or attend the prayers of a family on weekdays; there must be private prayer also.*
    3. We must make private prayer part of our daily walk, as obedience to God, for praise and adoration, forgiveness, supplication for ourselves and for others, and to conform our will to God's. With all this we can rest in the sovereignty of God, and we can take comfort knowing that Christ is our advocate.
    4. We are called to pray without ceasing, 1 Thess 5:17 This is inclusive of public and private prayer, but also being in a prayer-filled state of mind. Private prayer is an integral part of this. What a peace this gives us.
  - D. In praying, the principal object to be sought is to be alone with God.
    1. *We should endeavor to find some place where no mortal eye sees us, and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God.*
    2. Whether or not we have occasion to pray in public, we must have time alone with God. We should seek to improve our comfort and confidence in praying publicly, but there is no replacement for private prayer.
    3. Consider what we do in the secular world if given the opportunity to meet someone of great importance. We would go out of our way to be in the same room, never mind a 1 on 1 occasion. How seriously do we take our 1 on 1 time with the God of the universe?
    4. Christ's focus, and ours, should be on the manner in which we pray. In addition to the mandate for private prayer, we could also take Christ to mean that when we pray in public, we ought to act like we are praying in private. Contrary to the pharisees, we should pray like no one, but God can see or hear us.
    5. Whenever we pray, we should be careful how we pray. We are praying to the God of the universe, but also to our loving heavenly father. Our prayers should be reverent, but honest and vulnerable. Nothing should be done for show, with no rote phrases or repetitions. The focus should never be on the one praying; only the God to whom we are praying.
  - E. *In all our duties, whether giving or praying, the great thing to keep in mind is, that we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God.*
    1. It is not the quantity of our words or our eloquence that matters to God. It is our heart. Anything done for formality's sake, anything done as mere bodily service, anything done without the right motive and without a pure heart is abominable and worthless in God's sight.
    2. *He takes no account of the quantity of money we give or the quantity of words we use: the one thing at which his all-seeing eye looks, is the nature of our motives and the state of our hearts.*
    3. The shortest, most genuine prayer is more pleasing to God than a long, flowery prayer filled with empty eloquence.

- III. The Lord's Prayer is one of the most well-known passages in all of scripture, but it is also one of the most mindlessly repeated portions of scripture. Christ gives us this model, full of Biblical truth.
- A. *No part of scripture is so full and so simple at the same time as this: it is the first prayer we learn to offer up as children; here is its simplicity. It contains the germ of everything which the most advanced saint can desire; here is its fullness. The more we ponder every word it contains, the more we shall feel this prayer is of God.*
- IV. Ryle breaks down each phrase nicely, but see also; WLC, WSC, Heidelberg Catechism, etc.
- A. The first sentence declares to whom we are to pray – 'Our Father, who art in heaven'.
1. We are not to pray to men or saints or angels; prayer is reserved for God alone. By beginning our prayer this way, we put God in his rightful place, pre-eminent before all.
  2. We declare God to be our Father in two ways. In a mundane way, he is our creator and the creator of all things, Acts 17:28. In a spiritual sense, we call him Father, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col 1:20-22. We call him father in a way that OT saints saw only dimly, that we are his children by faith in Christ, and adopted by Him through the work of Christ. This is the sonship we must desire and rest in.
  3. *Without faith in Christ's blood and union with him, it is useless to talk of trusting in the fatherhood of God.*
- B. The second phrase is a petition respecting God's name; 'Hallowed be thy name'.
1. We exalt God above all else, but we do not make him holy or magnified by declaration; instead, we submit ourselves to his holiness and glory. Picture Isaiah 6:3 – this is in the same vein. This is a dual magnification of God and submission of ourselves. Consider Isaiah's reaction, Isa 6:5.
  2. What is meant by 'thy name'? This is not a superficial elevation of a word or a name or title. We refer to all of God's attributes. We pray, that all of God be hallowed. God's *name* is the sum of all his attributes.
  3. *By the name of God, we mean all those attributes under which he is revealed to us, his power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy and truth, etc. By asking that they may be hallowed, we mean that they be made known and glorified.* The magnification of God's own glory should be our greatest desire. John 12:28, WSC Q101. *It is the purpose for which the world was created; it is the end for which the saints are called and converted; it is the chief thing we should seek, that God in all things, may be glorified.*
- C. The third phrase is a petition concerning God's kingdom, 'Thy kingdom come'.
1. Kingdom refers to the kingdom of grace that God sets up and maintains in the hearts of believers, by his spirit and word. More specifically we mean the kingdom of glory that shall be set up when Christ returns.
  2. This is the time when sin, sorrow and Satan will be cast out of the world. This should be desired above all things, second only to the glory of God in all things. We are asking the kingdom of Satan be destroyed and the kingdom of grace advanced. Note the first two phrases form the basis for Question 1 of the WSC.
- D. The 4<sup>th</sup> phrase is a petition concerning God's will; 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.
1. God's will is performed perfectly in heaven. Here we request that his will be done as perfectly on earth. This is a prayer for obedience, more than a prayer to submit to the sovereignty of God.
  2. *Our truest happiness is perfect submission to God's will, and it is the highest charity to pray that all mankind may know it, obey it, and submit to it.* May God's law be obeyed by believers and unbelievers alike.
- E. The 5<sup>th</sup> phrase is a petition regarding our own daily wants; 'Give us this day our daily bread'.
1. Though a reference to the daily manna the Israelites received in the wilderness, this goes beyond our next meal. This is not merely a prayer for daily sustenance, but of complete and utter dependence upon God for everything. Do we give God the credit, thanks and glory for every detail in our life?
- F. The 6<sup>th</sup> phrase is a petition regarding our sin; 'Forgive us our debts'.
1. Regular confession and seeking forgiveness is the hallmark of the Christian life, and the center of our sanctification. We declare ourselves to be sinners and in continuous need of God's forgiveness.
  2. *We are instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission.*
- G. The 7<sup>th</sup> phrase is a profession respecting our own feelings toward others; 'as we forgive our debtors'.
1. We must mirror God's forgiveness with a continuous attitude of forgiveness toward others. This is so important that Christ emphasizes this one point after the end of the prayer. If we do not forgive others, we have no right to ask God to forgive us. Christ deals with this hypocrisy in the final verses of this section.
  2. *To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy; it is even worse than hypocrisy: it is as much as saying (to God) 'Do not forgive me at all'. Our prayers are nothing without charity.*
- H. The 8<sup>th</sup> phrase is a petition respecting our weakness; 'Lead us not into temptation'.
1. This teaches us that we are liable at all times, to be led astray and fall. It's a very real thing and we need constant reminders to stay on guard, lest we fall. Temptation isn't sin, but it's an open door to sin. Rarely does sin occur without temptation directly preceding. There is a reality check, and comfort in 1 Cor 10:13.
- I. The 9<sup>th</sup> phrase is a petition regarding our dangers; 'Deliver us from evil'.
1. We're taught to ask for God's protection against evil in this world, in our hearts, and the evil one himself. We know evil will surround us until 'His kingdom comes' so we must continually pray for deliverance.
- J. Conclusion to the Lord's Prayer – is it in scripture or not? An interesting controversy.
- K. Parting application from Ryle, page 44. Next week: Matthew Chapter 6:16-34