

Matthew 6
Part 1 (1-18)
Religious acts should please God

- I. Jesus teaches them who the religious acts are to please. (1-18)
 - A. Initial observations:
 1. Almsgiving, prayer and fasting are examples of religious observances.
 - a. These three are, and were, the most prominent practices for personal piety in Judaism.
 - b. These same three items play the dominant role in the Islamic faith.
Note: These three, along with pilgrimages and the reciting of the creed, make up their “pillars of faith”.
 2. Most people realized these three acts constitute practical religion, but Jesus points out they can be done in the wrong fashion.
 - a. The scribes and Pharisees were more interested in being *known* as religious people than in *being* religious people.
 - b. Reputation was more important to them.
 - B. An introduction to this section. (1)
 1. Religious acts are not to be done to win human approval.
 - a. “Take heed” means to pay close attention. A warning to us. (cf. 7:15)
 - b. “To be seen,” means to seek approval or reward of men. (cf. 23:27, 28)
 2. If we do religious acts to be seen of men then that will be our sole reward.
 - a. This is pointed out three times in this chapter alone. (vss 2, 5, 16)
 - b. If one seeks the admiration of men then the only reward will be the glory men give.
 - C. Benevolence must be done to please God. (2-4)
 1. Helping the needy should not be done to achieve glory from man.
 - a. “Alms” are kind deeds, charitable giving.
 - b. In the NT it is only used of benevolent activities toward the poor. (cf. Acts 9:36; 10:2, 4)
 - c. “Sound a trumpet” is calling attention to oneself.
 - d. If literal, cf. Num 10:3; Ps 81:3. If figurative, many things could call attention to oneself.
 - e. “Hypocrite” originally referred to actors who played a part.
 2. Helping the needy must be done to please God.
 - a. “But” is the contrast.
 - b. Expressions of secrecy.
 - c. Because helping is done in secret does not mean it goes unnoticed or unrewarded.
 - D. Prayer must be done to glorify God. (5-8)
 1. Praying should not be done to put on a show.
 - a. The hypocrite seeks to impress others with their prayers i.e., street corners, etc.
 - b. Posture in prayer is of no primary importance. (cf. 26:39; 2 Sam. 7:18; Mk 11:25; Acts 21:5)
 2. Jesus’ followers are to focus on God, not upon men.

- a. “Closet” is an inner room, indicating a place where one could not be observed.
 - b. Jesus is not forbidding public prayer. He is commanding that prayer be God oriented.
3. God’s children must pray differently than the children of the world pray.
 - a. “Vain repetitions” means to babble, to heap up empty phrases.
 - b. To pray long prayers was regarded to many as a way to assure the prayer would be heard.(cf. 1 Kgs 18:26)
 - c. I’ve heard many “children of the world” say that they prayed during great distress, i.e., accident, illness, trouble, etc.
 4. God is not impressed with long prayers.
 - a. Jesus does not forbid long prayers. (cf. Lk. 6:12; 18:1)
 - b. Neither does He forbid repetition. (cf. 26:39-44)
 - c. What He does forbid is mechanical prayers. (The repetition of Matt.6: 9-15)
- E. Jesus gives a model prayer. (9-15)
1. Prayer is addressed to God the Father.
 - a. Jesus addressed His prayers to God the Father. (cf. 11:25; Mk 14:36; Lk. 23:46; Jn. 17:1)
 - b. If He did, so should we!
 2. Prayer contains petitions to God.
 - a. “Hallowed be” is a request that God be sanctified throughout the world.
 - b. “Thy kingdom come” is requesting God’s rule to be established throughout the world.
 - c. “Thy will be done” is a request for the accomplishment of what God wants done.
 - d. ”In earth, as it is in heaven” applies to points a, b and c.
 3. Prayer contains petitions for humanity. (11-13)
 - a. “Daily bread” shows our dependence upon God to supply our physical needs. (cf Jn 6:31)
 - b. “Forgive us our debts” shows our dependence on God to supply spiritual needs.
 4. Forgiveness is reciprocal.
 - a. “If you forgive” conduct suiting a child of God. (cf Col 3:13)
 - b. “Trespases” are sins. Acts committed against self, another individual or against God. (cf Eph 2:1)

Note: It is impossible to forgive one who does not repent. Forgiveness is the acceptance of a relationship, which existed before sin occurred. (cf. Lk 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38) (Lk 17:3)
- F. Fasting is a private devotional, not a public display of piety. (16-18)
1. Fasting is not to be done to impress others.
 - a. “Fast” generally refers to hunger brought about by necessity. (cf. 2 Cor 6:5; 11:27)
 - b. Jesus does not present fasting as a binding obligation, but a natural reaction to some circumstances.

- c. Although the Pharisees fasted twice a week and made sure every one knew about it, Jesus did not fast often. (9:14, 15)
- 2. If we fast it must not be for show.
 - a. “Sad countenance” means a gloomy look.
 - b. “Disfigure” means to make your face unrecognizable.
Note: *Disfigure* is the same word used in vs 19 for *corrupt*.
 - c. “When you” implies God’s people will fast, but no time is set or required.
 - d. If you choose to do so you must look clean and normal.

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