

Series: Sermon on the Mount

Title: Secret Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6: 5-6

Date: October 4, 2009

Place: SGBC, Princeton, NJ

In chapter 5: 21-48, the Lord Jesus Christ turned his disciples from the corrupt doctrines of religion. In this 6th chapter he turns his disciples from the corrupt practices of religion. The three examples he uses are—alms, prayer and fasting. Last week we covered alms. This week we will begin looking at prayer. Remember, the same principle is applied throughout these three examples. Brethren, do not do, to be seen of men.

Matthew 6: 5: And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

I. First, the Lord says, “when thou prayest.”

It goes without saying that every true believer prays.

The Lord does not say, “Pray,” but “When thou prayest.” Believers stand in amazement that we have boldness—we are always welcome--to approach God through his Son, Christ Jesus in prayer. How is that?

In order to enter into God’s presence—you have to be perfect, you have to be a saint, you have to be holy—or God can not have anything to do with you. All God’s elect were unrighteous because of the sin of their first representative Adam. So their sins had to be put away by their second representative Christ Jesus and they had to be made holy and perfect.

Hebrews 9: 26:...now, once, in the end of the world, hath [Christ Jesus the Son of God] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself....28: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;

Hebrews 10: 10 says that every chosen child of God was *sanctified through the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ*...14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified—through the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Christ is applied to us by the Holy Ghost, the Witness to us. The everlasting promise of the triune God is written on the hearts and minds of every believer. He has spoken inside us saying, “Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.” You have no need to make any more offerings to God to make satisfaction for your sin. His Son has made perfect satisfaction for you. You are righteous in his Son, holy in his Son, as perfect and as welcome in his presence as his Son.

Matthew 6: 5: And when thou prayest

Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness [free, open, welcome access] to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Our Lord is teaching us to take heed that prayer is between you and your Father in heaven. Draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Your hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience and your bodies washed with pure water. By the blood of Christ, *therefore, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites*. Therefore, know that you can draw near in truth by his grace, in his blood, pure and accepted of God. So take heed that we do not pray to be seen of men. Believers love to approach God the Father in his Beloved Son.

II. The hypocrite simply loves the *act* of praying.

The hypocrite acts a part.

He pretends he is drawing near to God but in reality he is merely performing to earn the praises of men. The hypocrite places much emphasis on posture. v5: *They love to pray standing*. The hypocrite place mush emphasis on place. They love to pray in public places, v5: *in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets*. The Lord says in verse 5, *that they may be seen of men*. In verse 2 the Lord says, *that they may have glory of men*.

Matthew 6: 5: And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites...6: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

When you pray, pray to your Father.

The Lord is not forbidding others seeing us pray. The Lord is not saying that we can only pray at home in our closet with the door shut. The Lord is using an extreme statement to make the point of how important it is not to pray to be seen of men. Last week we saw in:

Matthew 6: 3: But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

If you do alms in such secrecy, that your own left hand does not know what your own right hand has done then it is in utmost secrecy. Not only are you not to do it to be seen of men, you yourself should not even to keep it in your own mind or sinful pride will prevail. The same kind of extreme statement is used in our text to make the point of how careful we are to be that we do not pray to be seen of men.

Long before I came here, I was in a crowded restaurant with a friend once. Right after ordering, as folks at the table were talking, going to the restroom and such, I thanked the Lord for the food that I was about to receive. I did not bow my head, close my eyes or speak a word audibly. But I prayed just as I would have had I put emphasis on my posture.

One of the fellows at the table was obviously a religious man. Not obvious because he spoke the truth of Christ, obvious because he made a point to draw attention to the fact that he was a religious man. This fellow knew that I preached. When the food came, he asked me to pray.

I said, "I already have." He said, "Well, I didn't see you do it."

But my Father which seeth in secret did. I was not thanking men, or praying for men or anyone else to see me. I was praying to my Father.

The point is brethren, take heed—take the utmost heed. This flesh is deceitful above all else, it loves to be seen, to be praised, to be gloried in, don't give it any occasion. Pray to your Father in secret, and not to be seen. Enter into your closet and shut the door to the world. Pray to your Father who seeth in secret,

Matthew 6: 6: And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Open Reward

As we approach God in Christ our High Priest washed in his blood, having our hearts sprinkled from the evil conscience of the hypocrite, by his grace we approach with a true heart--not a hypocritical heart. Approaching in Christ by the power and grace of God, we have open access to our God. Welcome arms! Just as he welcomes his own Son, he welcomes all his children whose conscience has been purged from dead works, whose bodies have been washed, who draw near in truth, in full assurance. What a reward!