

# Unmasking Religious *Hypocrisy*

Matthew 6:1-4

PART TWO

## Introduction

“You [] must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

### ***Practice Makes Perfect...Eventually***

“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” (v1).

Righteous living *must* be practiced. It is something we are called to do—

“hearts practiced in greed” (2 Peter 2:14).

Gk = ‘hearts that are exercised (*gumnazo*) in the practice of covetousness (*pleonexia*).’

“*Pleonexia* may be said to be the root from which [all] sins grow, the longing of the creature which has forsaken God to fill itself with the lower objects of nature” (Zodhiates).

“Rather train/exercise yourself for godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7).

“practice” 5x in Romans 1:32-2:3

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.... They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:17, 19-24).

Now being transformed, we must practice righteousness in our *thoughts, words, and actions*:

“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

“for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall” (2 Peter 1:10).

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are

the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:9-10).

### *Clergy Malpractice*

**From Orthodoxy** (right belief—the *depth*) **to Orthopraxy** (right practice—the *breadth*)

### **Giving: Its Theology & Practice**

We are called to give in two areas:

- the church
- the needy

### **The Reciprocity of Giving**

Release to Receive.

We give, not because God needs our money, but because we will be *blessed* in doing it:

“Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse” (Proverbs 28:27).

Isaiah 58:7-11

Matthew 25:34-39

“give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

### **Finding the Joy in Giving**

#### **1. By recognizing it as a *gift of God’s grace* (v1)**

*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,*

#### **2. By knowing that joyful giving is not dependent on *favorable circumstances* (v2a)**

*for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy...*

“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men” (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15).

“...received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,” (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

Only by God’s grace and the strength of our faith can affliction result in joy—and joy in poverty result in a wealth of generosity.

#### **3. By realizing that generosity in giving does not depend on financial abundance (v2b)**

*...and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.*

Giving should not be a reflection of how much one has; but an expression of gratitude and confidence in God and love for the saints.

“Their poverty no more impeded their generosity than their tribulation diminished their joy” (Gaebelein).

“There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered” (Proverbs 11:24-25)

#### **4. By being content to give according to your ability (v3a)**

*For they gave according to their means, as I can testify,*

They gave based upon what they had by given by God providentially.

#### **5. By giving sacrificially (v3b)**

*...and beyond their means, ...*

"No, but I will surely buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the Lord, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing." (1 Chronicles 21:24)

“It is in trying to do what we cannot do that we do best what we can do. He who keeps well within the limits of his supposed ability will probably not do half as much as he could” (Maclaren).

The poor widow in Jesus day gave all she had:

“A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:42-44)

#### **6. By giving willingly (v3c)**

*...of their own accord,*

The Macedonians gave of their own initiative; it was out of their own desire to give.

Freewill giving is to the Lord.

Fixed, imposed, or required contributions are not freewill offerings, but *taxes*.

#### **7. By recognizing that giving in fellowship to needy saints is a blessing and a privilege (v4)**

*begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—*

“We normally expect the person who solicits funds to plead with a prospective donor to support a cause. But here the donors were petitioning Paul to allow them to help the poor” (Kistemaker).

“For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.” (Romans 15:26-27)

Contributing to the support of the saints is borne out of a deep sense of connection within the Body of Christ.

“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:44-47).

Sharing implies a fellowship with Christ and a strong bond with fellow Christians, which promotes unity and mutual love and appreciation.

#### **8. By first giving yourself to the Lord then to others (v5a)**

*and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord...*

“One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, And He will repay him for his good deed” (Proverbs 19:17).

“Christian giving begins with the surrender of self to Christ, from which necessarily follows the glad offering of wealth.... If I belong to Christ, to whom does my money belong? But the consciousness that my goods are not mine, but Christ’s, is not to remain a mere sentiment” (Maclaren).

“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18)

#### **9. By recognizing that joyful giving, like genuine repentance, is according to the will of God (v5b)**

*...and then by the will of God, to us.*

Giving in this manner is in agreement with the revealed, *directive* will of God. And nothing happens apart from the sovereign, *decretive* will of God.

#### **10. By understanding that joyful, sacrificial giving is a work of grace (v6)**

*Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.*

Grace is the activity inspired by God's grace in us that results in overwhelming gratitude and leads to willful, abundant, sacrificial giving.

**11. By seeing that joyful giving comes from faith and abounds in love (v7)**

*But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.*

True giving comes from a heart of faith and flows from other Christian virtues.

**12. By knowing that willful, joyful, sacrificial giving is NOT a command, but evidence of a sincere Christian love (v8)**

*I say this not as a command, but to prove the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.*

Love that does not give is not true Christian love:

“But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality” (Romans 12:10-13)

*“freely you received, freely give”* (Matthew 10:8).

And by this, experience God's richest blessing.