

WHEN YOU PRAY

The Lord's Prayer, Summer 2023: Matthew 6:1-15

June 25, 2023

*Be careful not to do you 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them.
If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 6:1

The Sermon on the Mount

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² *"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

⁵ *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

"This, then is how you should pray"

Matthew 6

1. Jesus teaching on prayer is in the context of announcing the kingdom (Part 1 of Matthew's gospel)
2. The Sermon on the Mount reveals the ethics of the kingdom of God
3. Jesus' listeners, crowds and disciples, were aware of the "pillars" of Jewish piety – alms giving, prayer and fasting – like the pillars of Islam (profession, prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage) or eight-fold path of Buddhism (Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration)
4. Like so much of the sermon, Jesus moves from the external to internal, to the heart issue
5. Jesus forces us to consider the audience for our "works of righteousness" – our Father in heaven

Heidelberg Catechism, Part III: Gratitude

Lord's Day 45

Q 116. Why do Christians need to pray?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹

And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them.²

¹ [Ps. 50:14-15](#); [116:12-19](#); [1 Thess. 5:16-18](#) ² [Matt. 7:7-8](#); [Luke 11:9-13](#)

Q 117. What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?

A. First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word, asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word.³

¹ [Ps. 145:18-20](#); [John 4:22-24](#); [Rom. 8:26-27](#); [James 1:5](#); [1 John 5:14-15](#)

² [2 Chron. 7:14](#); [Ps. 2:11](#); [34:18](#); [62:8](#); [Isa. 66:2](#); [Rev. 4](#)

³ [Dan. 9:17-19](#); [Matt. 7:8](#); [John 14:13-14](#); [16:23](#); [Rom. 10:13](#); [James 1:6](#)

Q 118. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹ as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹ [James 1:17](#); [Matt. 6:33](#)

Q 119. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever.

Amen.¹

¹ [Matt. 6:9-13](#); [Luke 11:2-4](#)

Teach us to pray

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

² *He said to them, “When you pray, say:*

“ ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

³ *Give us each day our daily bread.*

⁴ *Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ”*

⁵ *Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’*

⁷ *“Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

⁹ *“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

¹¹ *“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Luke 11

1. A pattern for prayer (adoration, consecration, supplication, intercession, protection)

2. A parable to encourage our prayer (or, The “how much more” principle)

²⁷ *“Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

Luke 12:27

1. Jesus begins with an ordinary example of giving

2. Jesus concludes with our Father’s extraordinary giving of the Holy Spirit

Benefits of prayer

Q 115. Since no one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly, why does God want them preached so pointedly?

A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Second, so that we may never stop striving, and never stop praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.²

¹ [Ps. 32:5](#); [Rom. 3:19-26](#); [7:7, 24-25](#); [1 John 1:9](#)

² [1 Cor. 9:24](#); [Phil. 3:12-14](#); [1 John 3:1-3](#)

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 44

1. Prayer is a (the?!?) discipline of dependence

2. Prayer is the way the Holy Spirit works

3. Prayer is an investment (that begins to answer that "who is the master?" question from Romans 6:11-14)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Matthew 6:19-24

Resources for further study

The poster for Matthew does a good job of showing the 5 Parts of the gospel, reflecting a “new Torah”, can be found at <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/>

Larry Stockstill has a good summary of the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer at <https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template>

Keller has a good listen at <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/> or the .pdf version at <https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/UpSide-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller>

Keller also has an 8-part series on the Lord’s Prayer on .mp3 at <https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series>

Kevin De Young has a short piece on the Lord’s Prayer as a model at <https://clearlyreformed.org/the-lords-prayer-teaches-us-how-to-pray-every-other-prayer/>

Kirstemaker has an interesting article at www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/21/21-4/21-4-pp323-328_JETS.pdf

Monergism.com has many resources on the Sermon on the Mount at <https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7>

Ryle has a commentary of Matthew 6 at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm>

The CRCNA has lots to offer, see https://www.crcna.org/files/the_lords_prayer

Bob Deffinbaugh has a sermon on this passage at <https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18>

Spurgeon has an interesting prayer take is at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/#flipbook/>

AUTHOR: 30-40 YEARS OF ORAL TRADITION

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

1. MESSIAH FROM THE LINE OF DAVID

2. NEW MOSES

3. GOD WITH US

4. CLASH OF KINGDOMS

5. JESUS IS JUDGED ON THEIR BEHALF

Things to look for

#1 LOOK UP OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS (THERE ARE A LOT)

#2 LOOK CLOSELY AT THE PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT JESUS

IRREDEEMABLES + UNIMPORTANT + FAITH = TRANSFORMATION

CONNECT JESUS TO OLD TESTAMENT

1-3 ABRAHAM ... DAVID ... JESUS

4-7 ANNOUNCES GOD'S KINGDOM? SERMON ON THE MOUNT (ch 5-7)

8-10 JESUS BRINGS KINGDOM INTO PEOPLES LIVES

11-13 RESPONSES TO JESUS

14-20 THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

21-25 CLASH OF KINGDOMS

26-28 PASSOVER MEAL - NEW MEANING

IMMANUEL GOD WITH US

MOSES

- OUT OF EGYPT
- CROSS IN THE RED SEA
- WILDERNESS FOR 40 YEARS
- RECEIVES LAW FROM MOUNTAIN

JESUS

- OUT OF EGYPT
- BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN RIVER
- WILDERNESS FOR 40 DAYS
- GIVES LAW FROM MOUNTAIN

JESUS > MOSES

- DELIVER FROM SLAVERY
- GIVE NEW DIVINE TEACHING
- SAVE FROM SIN
- INITIATE A NEW COVENANT

NEW MOSES

PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM

DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE MESSIAH

SOUPERING SERVICANTS

CRITIQUE OF "YOU THINKERS"

HYPOCRITES!

YOU

HYPOCRITES!

ROBBING AUTHORITY

SAVING THE COMPROMISED STATUS OF HYPOCRISY

OFFENDED

WANTING TO KILL JESUS

1

2

3

4

5

BOOKS OF MOSES

(TORAH)

created by the Bible Project

Matthew chapter 6

J.C. Ryle, 1856 at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm>

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. [Matthew 6:1-8](#)

In this part of the sermon on the mount the Lord Jesus gives us instruction on two subjects. One is that of giving alms. The other is that of prayer. Both were subjects to which the Jews attached great importance. Both in themselves deserve the serious attention of all professing Christians.

Observe that our Lord takes it for granted, *that **all who call themselves His disciples will GIVE ALMS.*** He assumes as a matter of course, that they will think it a solemn duty to give, according to their means, to relieve the needs of others. The only point He handles is the *manner* in which the duty should be done. This is a weighty lesson. It condemns the selfish stinginess of many in the matter of giving money. How many are "rich towards themselves," but poor towards God! How many never give a farthing to do good to the bodies and souls of men! And have such people any right to be called Christians, in their present state of mind? It may be well doubted. A giving Savior should have giving disciples.

Observe again that our Lord takes it for granted, *that **all who call themselves His disciples will PRAY.*** He assumes this also as a matter of course. He only gives directions as to the best way of praying. This is another lesson which deserves to be continually remembered. It teaches plainly that prayerless people are not genuine Christians. It is not enough to join in the prayers of the congregation on Sundays, or attend the prayer of a family on week-days. There must be private prayer also. Without this we may be outward members of Christ's church, but we are not living members of Christ.

But what are the rules laid down for our guidance about almsgiving and praying? They are few and simple. But they contain much matter for thought.

In GIVING, **everything like ostentation is to be abhorred and avoided.** We are not to give as if we wished everybody to see how liberal and charitable we are, and desired the praise of our fellow men. We are to shun everything like *display*. We are to give quietly, and make as little noise as possible about our charities. We are to aim at the spirit of the proverbial saying, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand does."

In PRAYING, *the principal object to be sought, is to be alone with God.* 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. This is a rule which many find it very difficult to follow. The poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be really alone. But it is a rule which we must all make great efforts to obey. Necessity, in such cases, is often the mother of invention. When a person has a real desire to find some place, where he can be in secret with his God, he will generally find a way.

In all our duties, whether giving, or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is, *that **we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God.*** Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. 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. "Our Father sees in secret."

May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock, on which many are continually making spiritual shipwreck. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls, if they only perform a certain amount of "religious duties." They forget that God does not regard the quantity, but the quality of our service. His favor is not to be bought, as many seem to suppose, by the formal repetition of a number of words, or the self-righteous payment of a sum of money to a charitable institution. Where are our hearts? Are we doing all, whether we give or pray, "as to the Lord, and not to men?" Do we realize the eye of God? Do we simply and solely desire to please Him, who "sees in secret," and by whom "actions are weighed?" ([1 Sam. 2:3](#).) Are we sincere? These are the sort of questions, with which we should daily ply our souls.

MATTHEW 6:9-15

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. "For if you forgive men their

trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. [Matthew 6:9-15](#)

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so well known as this. Its words are familiar, wherever Christianity is found. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who never saw a Bible, or heard the pure Gospel, are acquainted with "Our Father," and "Paternoster." Happy would it be for the world, if this prayer was as well known in the spirit, as it is in the letter!

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so *full*, and so *simple* at the same time, as this. It is the first prayer which we learn to offer up, when we are little 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."

The Lord's prayer consists of ten parts or sentences. There is one declaration of the Being to whom we pray. There are three prayers respecting His name, His kingdom, and His will. There are four prayers respecting our daily needs, our sins, our weakness, and our dangers. There is one profession of our feeling towards others. There is one concluding ascription of praise. In all these parts we are taught to say "we," and "our." We are to remember others, as well as ourselves. On each of these parts a volume might be written. We must content ourselves at present with taking up sentence by sentence, and marking out the direction in which each sentence points.

The first sentence declares ***to whom we are to pray***--"Our *Father* who is in heaven." We are not to cry to saints and angels, but to the everlasting Father, the Father of spirits, the Lord of heaven and earth. We call Him Father, in the lowest sense, as our Creator; as Paul told the Athenians, "in him we live, and move, and have our being--we are also his offspring." ([Acts 17:28.](#)) We call Him Father in the highest sense, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reconciling us to Himself, through the death of His Son. ([Col. 1:20-22.](#)) We profess that which the Old Testament saints only saw dimly, if at all--we profess to be His children by faith in Christ, and to have "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." ([Rom. 8:15.](#)) This, we must never forget, is the sonship that we must desire, if we would be saved. Without faith in Christ's blood, and union with Him, it is vain to talk of trusting in the Fatherhood of God.

The second sentence is ***a petition respecting God's name***--"May your name be kept holy." 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. By asking that they may be "holy," we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers--"Father, glorify your name." ([John 12:28.](#)) 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 "in all things God may be glorified." ([1 Peter 4:11.](#))

The third sentence is **a petition concerning God's kingdom**--"May your kingdom come." By His kingdom we mean first, the kingdom of *grace* which God sets up and maintains in the hearts of all living members of Christ, by His Spirit and word. But we mean chiefly, the kingdom of *glory* which shall one day be set up, when Jesus shall come the second time, and "all men shall know Him from the least to the greatest." This is the time when sin, and sorrow, and Satan shall be cast out of the world. It is the time when the Jews shall be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, ([Rom. 11:25,](#)) and a time that is above all things to be desired. It therefore fills a foremost place in the Lord's prayer. We ask that which is expressed in the words of the Burial service, "that it may please you to hasten your kingdom."

The fourth sentence is **a petition concerning God's will**--"May your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." We here pray that God's laws may be obeyed by men as perfectly, readily, and unceasingly, as they are by angels in heaven. We ask that those who now obey not His laws, may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them, may obey them better. 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.

The fifth sentence is **a petition respecting our own daily needs**--"give us this day our daily bread." We are here taught to acknowledge our entire dependence on God, for the supply of our daily necessities. As Israel required daily manna, so we require daily "bread." We confess that we are poor, weak, needy creatures, and beseech Him who is our Maker to take care of us. We ask for "bread," as the simplest of our needs, and in that word we include all that our bodies require.

The sixth sentence is **a petition respecting our sins**--"Forgive us our debts." We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. 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. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to "wash our feet." ([John 13:10.](#))

The seventh sentence is **a profession respecting our own feelings towards others**--we ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. 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, "Do not forgive me at all." Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

The eighth sentence is **a petition respecting our weakness**--"Bring us not into temptation." It teaches us that we are liable, at all times, to be led astray, and fall. It instructs us to confess our infirmity, and beseech God to hold us up, and not allow us to run into sin. We ask Him, who orders all things in heaven and earth, to restrain us from going into that which would injure our souls, and never to allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. ([1 Cor. 10:13.](#))

The ninth sentence is **a petition respecting our dangers**--"deliver us from evil." We are here taught to ask God to deliver us from the evil that is in the world, the evil that is within our own hearts, and not least from that evil one, the devil. We confess that, so long as we are in the body, we are constantly seeing, hearing, and feeling the presence of evil. It is about us, and within us, and around us on every side. And we entreat Him, who alone can preserve us, to be continually delivering us as from its power. ([John 17:15.](#))

The last sentence is **an ascription of praise**--"yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." We declare in these words our belief, that the kingdoms of this world are the rightful property of our Father--that to Him alone belongs all "power,"--and that He alone deserves to receive all "glory." And we conclude by offering to Him the profession of our hearts, that we give Him all honor and praise, and rejoice that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And now let us all examine ourselves, and see whether we really desire to have the things which we are taught to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Thousands, it may be feared, repeat these words daily as a form, but never consider what they are saying. They care nothing for the "glory," the "kingdom," or the "will" of God. They have no sense of dependence, sinfulness, weakness, or danger. They have no love or charity towards their enemies. And yet they repeat the Lord's Prayer! These things ought not to be so. May we resolve that, by God's help, our hearts shall go together with our lips! Happy is he who can really call God his Father through Jesus Christ his Savior, and can therefore say a heart felt "Amen" to all that the Lord's Prayer contains.

MATTHEW 6:16-24

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures

in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

[Matthew 6:16-24](#)

There are three subjects brought before us in this part of our Lord's sermon on the mount. These three are fasting, worldliness, and singleness of purpose in religion.

Fasting, or occasional abstinence from food, in order to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, is a practice frequently mentioned in the Bible, and generally in connection with prayer. David fasted, when his child was sick. Daniel fasted, when he sought special light from God. Paul and Barnabas fasted, when they appointed elders. Esther fasted, before going in to Ahasuerus. It is a subject about which we find no direct command in the New Testament. It seems to be left to every one's discretion, whether he will fast or not. There is great wisdom in this. Many a poor man never has enough to eat, and it would be an insult to tell him to fast. Many a sickly person can hardly be kept well with the closest attention to diet, and could not fast without bringing on illness. It is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind, and not be hasty to condemn others, who do not agree with him. One thing only must never be forgotten. Those who fast should do it *quietly, secretly, and without ostentation*. Let them not "appear to men" to fast. Let them not fast to man, but to God.

Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It is no wonder that we find our Lord speaking strongly about it. It is an treacherous, harmful, enticing, and powerful enemy. It seems so innocent to pay close attention to our business! It seems so harmless to seek our happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins! Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They "lay up treasure on earth," and forget to "lay up treasure in heaven." May we all remember this! Where are our hearts? What do we love best? Are our chief affections on things in earth, or things in heaven? Life or death depends on the answer we can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be."

Singleness of purpose is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. If our eyes do not see distinctly, we cannot walk without stumbling and falling. If we attempt to work for two different masters, we are sure to give satisfaction to neither. It is just the same with respect to our souls. We cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time. It is vain to attempt it. The thing cannot be done. The ark and Dagon will never stand together. God must be king over our hearts. His law, His will, His precepts must receive our first attention. Then, and not until then, everything in our

inward man will fall into its right place. Unless our hearts are so ordered, everything will be in confusion. "Your whole body will be full of darkness."

Let us learn from our Lord's instruction about fasting, ***the great importance of cheerfulness in our religion.*** Those words, "anoint your head, and wash your face," are full of deep meaning. They should teach us to aim at letting men see, that we find Christianity makes us happy. Never let us forget that there is no religion in looking melancholy and gloomy. Are we dissatisfied with Christ's wages, and Christ's service? Surely not! Then let us not look as if we were.

Let us learn from our Lord's caution about worldliness ***what immense need we all have to watch and pray against an earthly spirit.*** What are the vast majority of professing Christians round us doing? They are "laying up treasure on earth." There can be no mistake about it. Their tastes, their ways, their habits tell a fearful tale. They are not "laying up treasure in heaven." Oh! let us all beware that we do not sink into hell by paying excessive attention to lawful things. Open transgression of God's law slays its thousands, but worldliness its tens of thousands.

Let us learn from our Lord's words about the "single eye," ***the true secret of the failures,*** which so many Christians seem to make in their religion. There are failures in all quarters. There are thousands in our churches uncomfortable, ill at ease, and dissatisfied with themselves, and they hardly know why. The reason is revealed here. They are trying to keep in with both sides. They are endeavoring to please God and please man, to serve Christ and serve the world at the same time. Let us not commit this mistake. Let us be decided, thorough-going, uncompromising followers of Christ. Let our motto be that of Paul, "One thing I do." ([Phil. 3:13.](#)) Then we shall be happy Christians. We shall feel the sun shining on our faces. Heart, head, and conscience will all be full of light. *Decision* is the secret of happiness in religion. Be decided for Christ, and "your whole body will be full of light."