

# Ministry of Grace

## Matthew 6 (Part 2)

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

<sup>9</sup>Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup>and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. <sup>14</sup>For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup>but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

<sup>16</sup>And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>22</sup>The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup>but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! <sup>24</sup>No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.

<sup>25</sup>Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the

grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

## Parallel Passages

### Mark 11:25

<sup>25</sup>And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

### Luke 11:1-4, 34-36

<sup>1</sup>Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup>And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. <sup>3</sup>Give us each day our daily bread, <sup>4</sup>and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

<sup>34</sup>Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. <sup>35</sup>Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. <sup>36</sup>If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

### Luke 12:22-34

<sup>22</sup>And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

<sup>25</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>26</sup>If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

<sup>29</sup>And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. <sup>30</sup>For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

<sup>31</sup>Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. <sup>32</sup>Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

### Luke 16:13

<sup>13</sup>No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money."

# Notes

## General

As we pointed out last week, Jesus' teaching on how to pray (The Lord's Prayer) was probably not delivered as part of the Sermon on the Mount as Matthew has it here. He no doubt inserted it here because Jesus was teaching on prayer. There is no question as to whether or not Jesus delivered the Lord's Prayer. He most certainly did, but it probably wasn't here.

In **Matthew 6:1** we saw Jesus talking about the proper, and improper, ways of practicing righteous deeds. He said not to do them just for show. He then gave an example of giving to the poor and pointed out how the hypocrites do it (for show). Then in verse five, he talked about how the hypocrites love to pray to be seen (again, for show). If we then skip over the lesson on how to pray, the next thing Jesus talks about is in **Matthew 6:16**, where He talks about fasting. Once again, He points out how the hypocrites do it (for show).

Jesus then teaches three rapid fire lessons on the problems of basing our personal satisfaction on material wealth. We can't take it with us, we should not be stingy with it, and we shouldn't worry about it.

## Matthew 6:16 - 18

**<sup>16</sup>And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

“fast” – The Greek word is *nēsteuō*, which means “to abstain from food for a religious purpose.” Throughout the Bible it is described as being accompanied by grief or mourning and its purpose is described as improving our focus on God and giving passion to our prayers and to our devotional life.

The primary physiological benefit in fasting is in its effect on focus. Although fasting can be very difficult for some people (and even unhealthy in extreme cases), it can also draw us closer to God, give us more compassion for the poorest among us, and increase our ability to control our appetites and passions.

Once again, we see Jesus teaching that if we are doing anything religious just so people will see us and be impressed with us, we will not receive anything in return from God. And, once again we see that doing it in private (in secret) is an indication of its genuineness.

## Matthew 6:19 - 21

**<sup>19</sup>Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

The words “lay up” and “treasures” are from the same root word. It is the Greek noun *thēsauros*, meaning “treasure” or “riches.” This word is based on the verb *tithēmi*, meaning “to put” or “to place.” The idea behind *thēsauros* is an accumulation of material things that have been placed

somewhere for “safe keeping.” We could translate the first part of verse 19 as “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.”

As an interesting side note, when the Magi visited baby Jesus, it tells us, “they fell down and worshipped him, and opening up their treasures (*thēsauros*) they presented gifts to him.”

“rust” – This is translated from the Greek noun *brōsis*, which means “eating.” Since gold and silver do not rust, this is not talking about them. What is more likely is that it is a reference to the storing up of food (such as grain) which either spoils or is eaten by vermin.

“destroys” – This is from *aphanizō*, which means “to be removed from sight,” that is, it disappears.

Before we get into what Jesus is teaching here, let’s look at what he **is not** teaching. He isn’t teaching that it is wrong to save up money for the future. After all, in **Proverbs 6:6-8** we are told to learn from the ants who store up food for the winter. And, Paul teaches us in **1 Timothy 5:8** that it is good to provide for our needs and the needs of our family. What Jesus is warning us about is the selfish accumulation of “things.” Here’s how he expressed it as recorded in Luke’s gospel:

And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15)

Jesus’ warning is about storing up “stuff,” that is, things that are temporary and fleeting. In Israel during the first century there were basically three types of treasure that people stored up: clothing, food, and money. We see throughout the Old Testament how valuable clothing was. For instance, in **2 Kings 5:1-27** we see that the king of Syria sent gold, silver, and changes of clothing to Elisha in an attempt to persuade him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. And in **Joshua 7:1-26** we see that Achan, son of Carmi succumbed to the temptation of taking silver, gold, and clothing from Jericho, after they had been defeated by the Israelites, and God condemned him for it.

These temporal things are not lasting. Clothing, for instance, can be eaten up by moths and “disappear.” Likewise, food disappears as it is eaten by animals or as it spoils and rots.

However, there is nothing wrong with storing up treasures and, actually, we are encouraged to do so. In fact, we are **commanded** to lay-up treasures. Say what?! We are commanded to lay-up treasures **in heaven**. This command is a present tense verb indicating that we are to be continually laying-up treasures in heaven. The reason for this command is to take our focus off of worldly stuff (which will disappear) and redirect it to heavenly treasure (which we will have for eternity).

So – immediately we have to ask ourselves, “How do we do it? How do we go about laying up treasure in heaven?” I recently read a story of how one man attempted to do it.

This man knew he was reaching the end of his life, so he called together three friends, a minister, a doctor, and a lawyer. He handed each one of them an envelope with \$30,000 cash in it and asked them to drop it in his casket at the memorial service. After he died, his three faithful friends each dutifully dropped their envelope in the casket and said a silent prayer for their departed friend.

After the service the three friends were talking and the minister said, “Guys, I must confess. Our church needed some repairs to the roof and I used \$10,000 of the money to have it done, so I only put \$20,000 in the casket.”

The doctor responded, “Well, since we’re confessing, my clinic had a burst water pipe and I used \$20,000 of the money to pay for repairs, so I only put \$10,000 in the casket.”

The lawyer responded indignantly, “Guys, I’m ashamed at you. We promised to put his money in the casket so I put in a check for the full \$30,000.”

I also heard of a man who had requested that a couple of bars of gold be buried with him in his casket. As he was approaching the pearly gates he was pleasantly surprised to realize that he was carrying the two heavy bars of gold. He also noticed a couple of angels laughing and asked them what was so funny. One of the angels responded, “Of all the things you could have brought with you, why did you bring some street pavement?”

Well, obviously, these are not the way we are supposed to take our wealth with us to heaven. That’s not how it works. We can do it a couple of ways. We can do it with “direct deposit,” or we can do it through “Body Building.” Let me explain.

### **Deeds of Righteousness (Direct Deposit)**

Last week we talked about how the hypocrites do their deeds of righteousness to be seen by others. They do their giving in public, they do their praying in public, and just a minute ago I talked about how the hypocrites make their fasting a public spectacle. In each of these examples Jesus says “**they have received their reward,**” that is, they receive recognition from people.

In all three of these examples, the Greek word translated “reward” is *misthos*. This word means “payment received for services rendered.” It is most often translated as either “reward” or “wages.” And, in each of these examples we are told that if we do these things in secret that, “**your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**” The word translated “reward” here is *apodidōmi*, which means “to give something in fulfillment of an obligation or expectation.” In other words, we can do acts of righteousness to get a full, up front, reward, and when we die, it stays here. Or – we can do these deeds of righteousness in private and have our paycheck direct deposited in our heavenly bank account where it will be waiting for us when we get there.

### **Body Building**

The other way we can lay-up treasures in heaven is by body building. In Ephesians it says that when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, he gave gifts to men:

Therefore it says, “**When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.**” (Ephesians 4:8)

What are the gifts he is talking about? Well, a few verses later Paul said:

**And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,**  
(Ephesians 4:11-12)

The primary reason that God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors is to equip the members of the church to do the work of the ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ.

And in his letter to the Romans he talks about the body of Christ and the gifts that members of the church are to use to build up the body:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is

contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:4-8) [NIV]

In 1 Corinthians he said these are gifts of the Spirit that are given for the common good (body building), and they are given as **He** has decided, not based on what we want:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good**. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, **who apportions to each one individually as he** (the Holy Spirit) **wills**. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

In summary, we are all given spiritual gifts and we are all expected to use these gifts to build up the body of Christ (the church). These gifts are not for personal use and they are given by the Holy Spirit as He wants, not as we want. These gifts include:

- Wisdom
- Faith
- Working of Miracles
- Tongues (known languages)
- Serving
- Teaching
- Giving
- Leadership
- Shepherding
- Knowledge
- Healing
- Prophecy
- Interpretation of Tongues
- Discerning of Spirits
- Exhortation (encouraging and warning)
- Showing Mercy
- Prophecy
- Evangelizing

Now, earlier in his message to the Corinthian church, Paul used two analogies for the church. The first is a garden reference (he calls it a field where one person plants and another person waters, but it is God who gives the increase). The other analogy is that of a building:

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his **wages** (*misthos*) according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:7-11)

Notice that the foundation the church is built on is Jesus Christ himself. This analogy of a building is what Paul uses to introduce what will happen to us at the Bema Seat Judgment:

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one's work will become manifest, for the Day (the Day of Jesus Christ) will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (*misthos*). If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

So, we see that there are two ways for us to lay-up treasures in heaven: doing deeds of righteousness in secret and using our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ (the church).

But, what if you don't know what spiritual gift (or gifts) you have been given? There are several web sites that will help you assess what your spiritual gifts are. A good one that I found is

<http://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>

This survey takes about 15 minutes to complete, but it will give you a good idea regarding the areas in which you are spiritually gifted.

There is actually a third way to lay-up treasures in heaven. It is a combination of direct deposit and body building. It is both a work of righteousness and an action which contributes to the building up of the body of Christ. It is something which all Christians are expected to do. It is giving to the church in support of the ministry. And, that's all I'm going to say about this particular subject.

### **Matthew 6:22 - 24**

**<sup>22</sup>The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup>but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! <sup>24</sup>No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.**

The next thing Jesus talked about is our vision, which may seem strange given that He just talked about accumulation of money (in the form of possessions) and right after this He will talk about not making money our god. The interpretation of verses 22 and 23 depend on the understanding of the Greek words translated “healthy” and “bad.” “Healthy” is from the Greek word *haplous*, which literally means “unfolded.” Some interpret this as meaning “simple” or “single” (that is, not double vision). And, the word translated “bad” is *poneros*, meaning “evil.” So, to understand these two, let's first look at *poneros*. The expression “evil eye” is used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) to indicate stinginess. Since *haplous* and *poneros* are used as opposites in verses 22 and 23, it indicates that *haplous* (without fold) is the opposite of stinginess. So it is most likely a description of liberality or generosity. This certainly makes sense in the context of Jesus' teaching about riches. He taught that we should not lay-up treasures on earth (verses 19-21), we should be generous with our money (verses 22 & 23), and we should not be enslaved to money (verse 24). This is also the position taken by A. T. Robertson, one of the preeminent Greek Scholars of all time.

In **Matthew 6:24**, Jesus warns about trying to serve two different masters, God and money. This may, in fact, be an extension of the previous comments about stinginess and liberality. If a person is focused on accumulating wealth, he (or she) will tend to be stingy. An interesting fact is that as rich people accumulate more wealth, they tend to become more stingy, not less. Remember, if we focus on ourselves and hoard our wealth it will stay behind when we die. However, if our focus is on God as our Lord and Master, we will tend to be more liberal with the use of our money, particularly as we focus on performing more acts of righteousness.

### **Matthew 6:25 - 34**

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body**

more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Jesus has just taught that earthly possessions are temporary and that we should be generous in sharing with others, especially with those with less than we have. And having also taught that we are to be a servant of God and not of money, He now addresses what would be an obvious question on everyone's mind, "If I am not saving up for the future and am generous in helping others who are less fortunate than I am, how will I provide for my own?"

First of all, Jesus did NOT say that it is wrong to save up for the future (remember the ant?). What He is saying is that the Father is aware of your needs and He will take care of you. There's no reason for you to worry about those things that you need for everyday living.

We are to store-up our treasures in heaven (send them on ahead), we are to be generous in sharing what God has provided for us with others, and we are to avoid letting money become our god. Therefore – there is no need for us to worry about food and clothing. The key, though, is that we must be focusing on God's kingdom and His righteousness. Well, what does that mean? If our focus is on heaven, where our treasure is, and we are actively seeking out ways of demonstrating our Kingdom membership by doing deeds of righteousness, and if we are using our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ, then God will take care of our physical needs.

This doesn't mean that we are all supposed to quit our jobs and sit around in a circle lifting our hands in prayer and praise, expecting God to order all our clothing and food from Amazon and have it delivered to our doorstep. That's not it at all. **It's all about focus!** We have been born into this physical world and we are to live in this physical world. But we also have been born into God's kingdom and it is important to keep our focus there. It is important for us to have a job and to earn a living. It is necessary for us to provide for ourselves and our families. But – our focus should constantly be on God and His Kingdom. We are to be in this world, but not of this world!

If our focus is on God, on being members of His kingdom, and on serving Him with acts of righteousness, then He will see that we are provided for. That's what Jesus meant when He said:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The Apostle Paul said a very similar thing to the Christians in Philippi, but with an important addition:

do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which



surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
(Philippians 4:6-7)

Even though God already knows what we need, we are commanded to pray, to give thanks for what He has already provided, and to ask for what we need, our daily bread. Just remember we are supposed to pray for bread, not desert.

## So What?

For once, I don't have to answer this question in my message. The question is not so much for me as it is for you. How's your heavenly retirement account coming? When I first reached retirement age, I was a bit disappointed in myself, because I hadn't put away as much as I had hoped I would have. But I can still do something about it. I worked with my older son in his business and earned some additional income until about 2 months ago and I'm still healthy enough that I can get a minimum wage job if I really need to. And, as I've shared with a number of you, Conie was offered her teaching job back, so we still have some income.

However, our heavenly retirement account doesn't work that way. Whatever treasures we have laid up in heaven will not grow once we get there. Any treasures we intend to have in heaven have to be stored-up now.

So, the question is this. Do you have treasures laid up in heaven? I don't know what form those treasures will take. We're really not told, except we know that we will receive crowns at the Bema Seat Judgment. And – we're told what we have to do to earn them. For instance, he who is faithful unto death will receive the Crown of Life (**Revelation 2:10**). And, he who proclaims the gospel and leads others to Christ will receive the Crown of Rejoicing (**1 Thess 2:19**). And, the Crown of Righteousness is waiting for those who love His appearing (**2 Tim 4:7, 8**), just to name a few.

However, from my study of God's word, it appears that the treasures we will have laid up in heaven will be different from the crowns. Some of us will have great treasures awaiting us. Others will have nothing. If all of this is depressing to you, I have good news for you. It's not too late! You can begin laying up treasures in heaven right now.

First of all, make sure you really are a Christian. Are you? Really? "But, I've been going to church my whole life," you may say. Or you may say, "My parents are Christians and I grew up in a Christian home." I'm not asking you if you've walked down the aisle at an evangelistic meeting. I'm not asking, have you recited the sinner's prayer. Have you ever recognized just how sinful you really are? Have you humbled yourself before God and admitted your sinfulness? The wages (*misthos*), the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Jesus Christ paid the wages for your sins when he died on the cross. Have you accepted His payment on your behalf? If not, then there is no better time than right now.

Then, when you have absolutely no doubt about your salvation, take your life focus off yourself and put it on God and His heavenly kingdom. Take your hands off of your life's steering wheel and let God drive. Serve Him by considering the good of others more important than your own. Read your Bible daily, not occasionally, every single day! Do your deeds of righteousness without sounding your own horn. It's time to start contributing to your heavenly retirement account right now.

Here's a way to start. Sometime today, when you're alone, open your wallet or your purse and take out a bill (a one, a five, a ten, a twenty, whatever you feel God would have you take out) fold it up and put it in your pocket. Then, the next time you drive by or walk by a street beggar, reach into your pocket and hand him or her the bill, and tell them that God wanted you to give them the money. And then, tell them, "God Bless You."

Look, I have done years of studying on the end times. I have no doubt that the rapture is just around the corner and my fear is that there will be some churches that will look exactly the same after the rapture as they did before, no one will be missing. I truly believe that there are a number of people in churches today who think they are saved, but they have never made a commitment and a true confession of faith. I do not want any one of you here to be left behind.

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:11-14) [NKJV]

Let's pray!

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