

Book of Matthew, Auditing the Master: A Tax Collector's Report

In prayer, in our first step, do we actually go mentally into the place where our supplies already are?

(Verse 3). "But when you do alms." This, again, is a very well organized speech. First, he introduces the subject of alms. Then he gives what the false alms are, the conditions under which alms should not be given, and then he gives the true alms.

Verse 3 introduces the truth, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." That temptation exists even in contribution in church today, when you decide to give more than a George Washington.

Occasionally, if you have to reach over so that whoever it is, other than George Washington, might be possibly seen by others dropped into the hat, human nature does derive a certain amount of satisfaction if our neighbor sees how righteous we are.

(Verse 4). He is exposing that here. He says, "It should be done in secret. Why? Because "God knows," and that's the only thing that counts. Because "the Father which sees thee in secret himself will reward thee openly." It will be seen in your life, the outcome and the outlook. The results in your life are all that's needed to bear witness to what has happened inwardly.

(Verse 5). We've finished with alms. Second thing, prayer. "When you pray, don't be as the actors are. They like to stand around publicly and speak their prayers in public. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." See the result of our thinking.

Matt. 6:6

□ (Verse 6). "But when you pray," first, now notice, here are the rules for praying. If we think we're praying, wait till we get through with what his requirements are, and then ask again. "When you pray," here's what we do. There's no way around these requirements, because this is Jesus' specific answer to how we pray. When we pray, number one, we do what? "Closest." Number two, "Shut the door."

Often we do one or two of these things but not all of them. Number three, "Pray." Don't forget why you're in that closet. Don't go to sleep with the door closed. What's good about studying the Greek that's behind this? The Greek word for "closest" is *tameion*. It really is not translated as closet, I don't believe any other time it's used. *Tameion* has in the Greek this meaning: it's a storehouse. It's a place in which our supplies are kept. Now ask yourself if you're really praying.

In prayer, in our first step, do we actually go mentally into the place where our supplies already are? That means in prayer we can't take any problem with us. In prayer, we're in the presence of the solution, or it's not prayer, as far as Jesus' definition is concerned. Once we're in there where the supplies are, shut the door so that the problem doesn't nag.

1 John 5:14. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" through the crack or into the keyhole. And then pray. That kind of prayer, just open your eyes, don't close them to the supplies already there.

Commentary Four

That's a prayer that really is more of affirmation than it is a petition. The Bible actually authorizes both kinds of prayer.

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But I think one of the most beautiful definitions of that kind of prayer which ties directly in with what Jesus is saying here in Matthew may be found in the First Epistle of John, Chapter 5. Measure your concept of prayer against this magnificent description of what it really is.

Aside
I John
5:14

6:14 (Verse 14). Let's take the state of mind or thought described here. "This is the confidence." Prayer has to have confidence. "That we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will." Not our will. What line in Jesus' Lord's prayer showed us that was true already? "Thy will be done." And what was his last commitment in Gethsemane before the Cross? "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." How important is it, even under maximum pressure, especially, under maximum pressure?

Verse 14 continued, "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." Notice the next verse.

(Verse 15). "And if we know that he hears us," Do we? Is that our attitude in prayer? Do we know, or do we hope? "If we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask," look at the next step. "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Look at that definition of prayer. Does it agree with Jesus' definition of going into the *tameion* where our supplies already are? In that *tameion* would this be fulfilled? Would we know that he's heard us? Would we know that we had already the petitions we desired of him?

1 John 5:15

What else could have prompted Jesus outside the grave containing Lazarus to have thanked his God (John 11:41,42) for already raising Lazarus when Lazarus hadn't even made a move, or at least a visible move to anyone around? Jesus expressing gratitude for the fulfillment of prayer before it was even visible.

raising of Lazarus example in
John 11:41,42

So, the Sermon on the Mount is meaty, isn't it? It's not just milk.

Matthew 6, (Verse 7), "Use not vain repetitions." Saying words, Jesus is telling us directly, is not part of the equation that gets results. Just words. How often one hears the Lord's Prayer almost as if the accelerator has been pressed to the floor?

Matt.
6:7

Even when it is said slowly, and as a matter of ritual, then, that's not what he means. Because right after he says that, he gives the prayer that's probably repeated more vainly than any other prayer since his time, the Lord's Prayer.

Josephus tells about a quote what Jonathan said to David. It isn't in the Bible. Where Josephus got this tradition, I don't know. Here was Jonathan. Jonathan was a lovely, lovely character in the Bible. Remember, he went contrary to his father to support David. Jonathan said to David, "This God, who, before I have expressed my thoughts in words, already knows what it is."

This giving of alms in secret, praying in secret, both having the open results in our lives. But we often elect to appear in public self-righteous, and that becomes our definition of religion.

Verse 8 says, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." So, what could words do? Convey something to God he doesn't already know? Or, is prayer to bring us into alignment with what God already knows? Isn't that why we have to go into the closet where the

6:8

answers are? Doesn't that bring us into alignment, at-onement, so to speak, with our Father's solution?

The solution is already implicit in the fact that God is our Father. Understanding that makes us his children. And the problems are baptized away in the sense of the Holy Ghost and fire, operating in thought. As if there could be a double source which causes a conflict in man's thinking.

The source of his problems and the source of his blessings, and their constantly struggling for preponderancy in thinking. Vain repetitions are not going to align our thought with God.

6:9 (Verse 9). "After this manner therefore pray ye," he said. "Our Father." Joachim Jeremiah, a German scholar, who is widely respected for his studies on Jesus, has stated that in every case, except when he is quoting the Old Testament, Jesus undoubtedly used the word "Abba," when he spoke of his Father.

That puts Jesus in a very unique category. No other Hebrew thinker, or writer, prior to Jesus, or even subsequent to Jesus, except one of his followers, ever used the word "Abba" in connection with Father. Whatever Jesus did in connection with his God would express his sense of the relationship to God. Therefore, it would be vital to comprehend that, if that was Jesus' favorite word for God, at least to express his fatherhood.

ABBA Do you know what "Abba" is? It's probably the first word a Hebrew child learns. It means "Daddy." "Abba" and "Imma," Daddy" and "Mommy." You hear that today in the Holy Land. Little child gets way behind his parents, "Abba, Abba, Abba." Just think of that.

If we're little children, that have gotten behind our parent, how did Jesus say we were to enter into the kingdom of God? As a little child (Mark 10:15). If we really are saying the Lord's Prayer in the spirit that he meant it. Apparently, you and I are forced to go to the Father as little children, "Daddy." That tender relationship, that reliance, that trusting sense that our divine parent is there.

★ So, "Abba" is a very precious word. Paul uses it later on with the same tenderness (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). He would never have used that as a Pharisee, which he was, but got it from his study of Jesus.

6:13 (Verse 13). We know the Lord's Prayer sufficiently, I'm sure. There's some doubt as to whether the last line was in the original, the last line being, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." That last line hardly violates the spirit of the prayer. It could very easily have been there. But we don't know for sure.

(Verse 16). We move from alms and prayer into fasting, "When you fast, don't be as the actors, hypocrites, of a sad countenance." There is a lot of fasting in religion today. Many denominations set periods aside for fasting. Jesus, almost foreseeing that in human nature, says, "When you fast, don't disfigure your faces. That's an appearance of fasting."

(Verse 17). "But when you fast, do the opposite, wash your face."

6:18 (Verse 18). "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret."