

=BIBLE PROMISES=

Lesson 8

Bible Promises About Rewards

AIM: to teach my pupils that if good works are done to gain rewards from people, there will be no reward from God for those works.

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask your pupils: How many have ever done something special for someone so that he would be surprised and especially pleased? Perhaps you did some special job without being asked, a special job that would greatly please someone. You were so excited and pleased with yourself for having done that special task that you went around telling others. Then the news “leaked out” to that someone special, and it was not a surprise any longer when you saw him. The reward of seeing the special person’s first deep pleasure was not yours to enjoy; you had forfeited that reward.

INTRODUCTION: God has a plan for rewarding His children whenever they do something for Him. Jesus told of this plan one day. He had gone up into a mountain to teach His own. He had already been talking quite a while, showing many wonderful truths. He was seated on one of the grassy slopes which slant toward the beautiful Sea of Galilee. While the waves gently lapped the shore and gleefully played in the center of the lake, Jesus spoke. He desired that His listeners have the best that was intended for them, so He was telling them how to have it. In telling them, He had us in mind too, for the Holy Spirit instructed men who heard Jesus that day to write down those exact words so that He might preserve them even to this time. One of those men, Matthew, wrote the words which are recorded in Matthew 6:1-18. He wrote of a warning which Jesus gave, the danger connected with the warning, and the result of heeding Jesus’ warning. In this passage of Scripture, a promise is repeated three times: “...thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly,” Matthew 6:18. The condition to this promise is that certain acts be performed by God’s people, with the thought of pleasing only Him. The promise we shall learn in today’s lesson is Matthew 6:4, “That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

I. WHAT IS THE WARNING WHICH JESUS IS GIVING US?

1. Righteous acts are to be performed with great caution. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men.” (In Matthew 6:1 the word “alms” means “righteousness.” In Matthew 6:2-4 “alms” means an act of benevolence or giving.) There are three righteous acts discussed—giving, praying and fasting. They are given as illustrations of verse 1 and are described in verses 2 through 18.
2. Giving, praying and fasting are not to be done to be seen of men. Men may see these works performed, just as they should see other works of Christians (Matthew 5:14-16), but they are to be done only for the Lord’s sake. Notice especially verse 16.
 - 1) These acts are to be done with obedience as a motive. Matthew 23:23 is an echo of Malachi 3:10 and is an order from Jesus concerning what proportion Christians must give of their income. In addition to tithing, there must be the alms-giving—the giving to the poor and needy. See Luke 11:41a. Christians are to pray and not to faint, even though an answer may be long in coming. See Luke 18:1. There are times when Christians should fast as they are praying for some great answer from the Lord. Read Matthew 17:21; Acts 14:23.
 - 2) These acts are to be done with love as a reason for doing them. Give to someone because you love him; pray for someone because you love him; fast because you want to see a great work done for someone, Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:32, 33. (Fasting means going without food, not just going without certain food.)
3. Righteous acts are to be performed privately and in secret.
 - 1) Giving is to be done without thinking about it or remembering it. Jesus said, “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret.” Give; then forget the gift, Matthew 6:3, 4a.
 - 2) Do not proclaim your gift. Jesus said that hypocrites sound a trumpet before them as they give in the synagogues and in the streets. This was done so that others would notice that a gift had been given. Picture the treasury of Herod’s temple. The court of the women was also the treasury; it was on a level a few stairs above the entrance to the temple area. People cast their tithes and offerings into thirteen trumpet-shaped chests which stood in this court. Jesus

referred to the fact that as some people cast in their gifts, they had trumpet players proclaim their generous act. Also picture a person who, with great flourish, drops some money into a poor beggar's hand or cup.

- 3) Give your gift in secret. Your Heavenly Father sees the gift which you are giving. He keeps the heavenly record and account books; there is no need for you to add up your giving in order to have others praise you for it. Do not desire praise and honor from people for the gift.
4. Praying is to be done in private. Praying is communication from us to God. Praying is asking Him for needs to be supplied and for events to be controlled by Him.
 - 1) Go into a private room and shut the door. Since this is to be a private conversation with God, no one else should particularly be listening to it. When the prayer is a common group prayer, someone does pray audibly with others listening, but the prayer should still be talking with God and not with the thought of what people are thinking of the prayer. God will hear the secret, private prayer of His children. He also hears their thanksgiving.
 - 2) Do not pray to be seen of people. "Some love to pray in the synagogues" and "in the corners of the streets." The reason these particular people love to pray in these places is so that they may be noticed by other people and therefore be known as very godly, religious people.
5. Fasting is to be a strictly private act. Jesus said, "Appear not unto men to fast." Do not want sympathy or praise from people; God sees and knows the burden and the fasting.
 - 1) When there is a need for fasting, no one is to know about it. "Seem to men as if thou art not fasting." If one feels that he should not enjoy the pleasures of food until a burden has been lifted or a prayer has been answered, he is not to wear a long face nor let his beard grow nor let his hair go uncombed, etc., Matthew 6:17, 18.
 - 2) When a person is fasting, he is to look as normal as he can. He is not to look sad.

II. WHAT IS THE DANGER OF WHICH JESUS IS WARNING?

1. The reward for the righteous acts will come from people. If people know of the gift and the praying and the fasting, they will praise and honor the person and maybe even give a gift in return. That is all the reward which he will receive.
 - 1) This is true if the motive for doing good deeds is so that others will learn of the deeds and recompense for them. Of course, many times a gift is given and the recipient knows who the giver is. If the motive of the giver is from a heart of love, then God knows this.
 - 2) The reward from men cannot be compared with the reward which comes from God. The gift from man is only temporal because man is not here on earth to stay more than a lifetime. Man's reward may be ill-timed according to God's thinking; it may come at a time when pride and conceit could be built up in the person who receives the reward. This attitude would not be good. The reward from man may not be given with a pure motive.
2. A reward cannot come from God for an act done because of a wrong motive. This is in spite of the fact that the act may be good or may have accomplished much good, Matthew 6:1, 5, 16. You have already received your reward—from man.

III. WHAT IS THE PROMISE CONNECTED WITH HEEDING JESUS' WARNING? God will see the giving, the praying and the fasting which are done with Him in mind, and He will reward openly for them.

1. God's reward may come partially now. There will be meat in your house accompanied by great blessing for your rightly-motivated giving. See Malachi 3:10; Proverbs 11:25. Answers will come to private prayers now, Matthew 7:7-11. Secret fasting will reap the results which should be accomplished. Moses received the law while he fasted. In the Bible, fasting would often take place while people confessed their sins and got right with God. Fasting on behalf of someone else brings about God's purpose for them, Matthew 17:21; Acts 13:2.
2. God's reward will be eternal and in much greater proportion than man's act of righteousness. On Judgment Day when God's children are judged according to their works, Jesus will reward them, Revelation 11:18; 22:12. He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into

the joy of thy lord,” Matthew 25:21. He will reward openly. He will announce honor and glory upon His children for their faithful righteousness.

CONCLUSION: The promise which we have studied today—Matthew 6:4—can be fulfilled whenever the Christian performs any act of righteousness purely for the sake of pleasing and glorifying God. The promise can be fulfilled, therefore, only after one of the most difficult acts is accomplished by Christians—that of putting self down. If we are seeking to please others, we are actually seeking to please ourselves; for if we please others, it will cause them to think well of us. The big question is: Are we pleasing God or pleasing ourselves? Do we really seek to glorify and honor God? We should have such a love for God that we have no time to think about ourselves. “We shall never get rid of self by concentrating on self.” Look at Jesus and realize what He has done for us; then desire to do for Him. We have discussed three works of righteousness which are to be done with the pure motive of doing them unto the Lord, not to be seen of men.