

Practicing Genuine Piety

Key Verse: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”
—Matthew 6:1

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:1-14

THE GREAT TEACHER

thoroughly denounced the sin of hypocrisy, which in practice is an attempt to deceive others.

In our Key Verse, the Master warns against feigning piety by performing charitable acts to gain approval from fellow men. The Heavenly Father who is able to read the heart will not bless almsgiving, nor other good deeds, unless they are motivated by sincerity.

Jesus indicates hypocrites might noisily attract attention to themselves when giving offerings. Nevertheless, he dismisses such conduct, stating, “They have their reward,” implying that whatever earthly reputation they obtain in the form of human praise, it will not be of benefit to them from God’s standpoint.—vs. 2

Obedient Christians will heed his admonition to do their charitable acts in secret, thereby avoiding outward notoriety. They should “do all to the glory of God.”—I Cor. 10:31

Sincerity in prayer also is emphasized by Jesus. Petitions to God should not purposely be done in public locations so that others may be impressed by the offerer’s piety. Instead, believers should engage in personal,

private communication with the Father. (Matt. 6:5,6) The use of prayer in the church, however, is a proper form of worship among fellow believers.

It should proceed from the heart and not consist of stock phrases, or “vain repetitions.” (vs. 7) Since selfish prayers are likely to be unanswered, instruction in presenting appropriate petitions to the throne of heavenly grace is necessary. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”—James 4:3

‘The Lord’s Prayer,’ as it is sometimes styled (Matt. 6:9-13), is an appropriate, orderly expression to God, offered in simplicity, that reflects reverence and acknowledges the sovereignty of the Creator. It voices a desire and confidence that Divine authority will bring to pass the establishment of a righteous kingdom where conditions on earth will be in harmony with the perfection and bliss that exist in the heavenly domain. In contrast to the many problems in the world that mankind presently is unable to solve, that future age of blessing is described as a time when “the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”—Hag. 2:7

Following recognition of the Creator and his promises, dependence upon him for daily sustenance, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, is acknowledged. In view of personal weaknesses and failures, believers may request forgiveness from the Supreme Ruler of the universe in proportion as they extend mercy to others who need their forgiveness. After acknowledging trials and dependency upon Divine grace, a plea for deliverance from the powers of evil is in order.

The fulfillment of this prayer will not only bring blessings to mankind but incomparable joy to faithful followers of Christ because “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens [spiritual rulership] and a new earth [social order], wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:13 ■