

BORN TO
REIGN



Study In the Book of Matthew

Righteousness in Worship

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Gil Rugh

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Righteousness in Worship

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus proclaimed, in the Sermon on the Mount, a message synonymous with that of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). The kingdom of heaven refers to the earthly kingdom prophesied and promised in the Old Testament over which the Messiah Himself will rule and reign, with Jerusalem as the capital. The question naturally arises regarding who will be part of that kingdom. The Jews took it for granted that their being descendants of Abraham guaranteed their entrance into the kingdom. Jesus clarified the fact that only those who have become believers in the Messiah, and the salvation which He brings, will be part of the kingdom He will establish. He revealed the character of those who will be part of that kingdom. They are to manifest the character of God Himself in their conduct. The sermon was the revelation of what their character and conduct were to be as believers.

As we read in Matthew 6, Jesus focused attention on a very basic matter – worship. Perhaps the greatest privilege given to a human being is to worship God Himself. This involves the privilege of access into the very presence of God, the privilege of honoring and exalting Him by bowing down and acknowledging His position as God and Lord. Not everyone has that privilege. It is restricted to a certain group because access into God’s presence has been provided by God Himself, so only those who come “God’s way” are acceptable to God as worshipers. God is looking for people to worship Him, but not just anybody is acceptable. Only those who worship Him according to His instructions are given this privilege.

The background for the matter of worship is clarified in the fourth chapter of John’s Gospel. There is a tendency for worship to

degenerate into a religion which focuses on externals – what you do and where you go. This is the issue in John 4. Jesus confronted the woman of Samaria. She drew Jesus' attention to the proper place for worship. The focal point of worship for her was the place where it was carried out. Jesus redirected her attention to the fact that the place is not the issue. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (John 4:23). There is a general classification of worshipers. Within that classification there are true worshipers – those who worship God in a way that is acceptable to Him. The last phrase of this verse indicates that God is looking for a certain kind of people to worship Him – those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. This indicates that worship does not take place primarily in the realm of the physical. Worship is an intensely personal matter between an individual and God which takes place in the spiritual realm and not in the physical realm. Two people may go to the same physical place, but it may be that only one is truly worshipping. True worship must take place in the context of the truth, the revelation God has given concerning Himself. The worshiper is not free to decide the terms of worship. Only God can decide those terms.

The basic word for "worship" means "to bow down" or to "prostrate" yourself, to "kiss the ground" before someone. In worship, you acknowledge the supremacy of God. Yet there are people who want to come to God on their terms. That is not worship. Worship involves humbling yourself before someone. The unworthiness of the worshiper is recognized in the superiority of the one who is being worshiped. Worship must be in the context of the truth of God. God specifies very clearly that only those who worship God through faith in the death and resurrection of His Son are acceptable as true worshipers.

The entire Book of Hebrews is given over to the subject of true worship. It demonstrates that only those people who believe that Jesus Christ died for them are acceptable to God as worshipers. That is what Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." No one comes into God's presence for any reason except through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That is the foundation for true worship. Those who come on that basis are the true worshipers.

Worship Is Personal, Not Necessarily Private

True worship is intensely personal, but it does not have to be private. A group of believers may gather at a building for public worship, but not everyone who enters the building worships. Today people have degenerated to the same point the Jews had – they tend to identify worship with a certain location and begin to sanctify the location. Then they think that as long as they go to that location at a certain time and go through certain motions and activities, they can leave assured that they have worshiped. That is the trap the Jews were in. That is the background for what was happening as Jesus wanted to correct any misunderstandings regarding acceptable worship of God (Matt. 6).

As noted in previous studies, the focal point of the Sermon on the Mount is righteousness. The key verse for the sermon is Matthew 5:20: “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” To be acceptable to God, you must have a righteousness greater than that possessed by the religious leaders of Judaism. You must have a righteousness that comes from God.

Jesus picked up this message of righteousness and said: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 6:1). This is a general statement about practicing righteousness. In the following verses we read how Jesus developed that concept in three areas which were crucial to the Jews in their plan of worship. The first area of practicing righteousness is the matter of alms – giving charitable gifts and performing acts of mercy (vv. 2-4). The next subject is prayer (vv. 5-15). In this study the focus of attention will be on verses 5 and 6, reserving the section known as the Lord’s Prayer for later extended studies. The subject of fasting will also be considered, which Jesus discusses in verses 16 through 18. The matter of practicing righteousness refers primarily to worship in the matter of alms, prayers and fasting.

Motivation Is the Key to True Worship

Jesus began this section with a word of warning: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them” (Matt. 6:1). Jesus had instructed believers, “Let your light shine

before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). These passages are not in conflict. The warning of Matthew 6:1 is not intended to keep you from practicing your righteousness before men. In fact, you are commanded in Matthew 5:16 to do that. But the warning of Matthew 6:1 is that you are not to be practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them. The crucial matter is the motivation for practicing your righteousness. That, in fact, is the subject of the entire section: Why are you doing this righteous deed before men? If your motivation is for them to see your work and honor you, you will have no reward from God. But if you are doing the righteous deed before men because you want them to see the character of God and glorify Him, then you will be rewarded by God in heaven. The phrase "to be noticed by them" becomes the issue in each of these areas.

Many people do righteous deeds, but some do them with the wrong motives. For some it's to hear others say of them, "My, he is a godly person," or "My, she is the most spiritual lady I have ever known." That was the motivation of the hypocrites Jesus was referring to in Matthew 6—to be noticed by men.

The principle established in this section is that the one you do it for is the one who will reward you. If you do your good works for men to see, so they will honor you, your reward is the reward they give you, therefore, do not expect any further rewards from God. You did not do it for God, you did it for men. The sentence "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full" is given in verses 2, 5, and 16. If the work is done for God, your reward will come from Him. The statement "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you," is given in verses 4, 6, and 18. The contrast is the reward. If you are doing your work for men, your reward will be from men. If you are doing it for God, your reward will be from God. But if you do your work for men, do not expect God to reward you.

Giving Alms As Part of Worship

The first matter Jesus addressed was the giving of alms, a very crucial part of the Jewish worship system. Jesus introduced the subject by saying: "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you,

they have their reward in full" (Matt. 6:2). The word "alms," used in some versions refers to charitable acts. It is carried over into English in the word "eleemosynary" from a Greek word *eleemosune*. The word means "act of charity" or "mercy" and encompasses many kinds of deeds. In this context it refers to giving.

A significant part of the Jewish worship system related to giving money to help the poor and needy. This practice had degenerated to the point that the hypocrites would give in such a way as to draw attention to what they were doing. When they gave their charitable gifts for the needy, they wanted to draw all the attention they could to the fact that they were doing this so that people would think of them as being godly, spiritual people. They were doing it so the people would notice them and honor them for it. Jesus called them hypocrites. The Greek word translated "hypocrite" originally referred to an actor, one who was playing a role, so it carried over to indicate one who was not genuine or sincere. Hypocrites are those who are playing roles, pretending to be something they are not. These Jews were pretending to be spiritual. They wanted people to think they were doing it for God, but they were really doing it for the praise of men. Verse 2 indicates that they did it "that they may be honored by men."

Matthew 5:16 says that we are to let our lights shine before men so that they will glorify the Father. The word translated "glorify" is the same word which is translated "honored" in Matthew 6:2. Believers are to do what they do that God might be glorified. The motivation of the hypocrites is the opposite of what it should be. The hypocrites were taking what God intended for His glory and are turning it around for their own glory. They were going through the motions and doing something with ulterior motives.

Who were the hypocrites in view here? Jesus did not specify but the context of Matthew makes it clear that when Jesus spoke of hypocrites, He had in mind the leaders — the scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew 5:20 we read that one's righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in order to get into the kingdom. The scribes and Pharisees were identified as hypocrites; they pretended to be godly when they were not. They had no real relationship with God.

Jesus referred to these hypocrites later by saying: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the king-

dom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13). The danger of false religious leaders is not simply that they are not going to heaven, but the serious matter is that they keep others from going as well by their false teachings. Jesus warned them in verse 14 when He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." He gave them exactly the same warning in verses 15, 23, 25, 27, and 29. Is it any wonder that Jesus was not one of the favorite people of the scribes and Pharisees? Such an approach was not especially geared to win friends and influence people!

Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees were pretending to be godly men but were not godly men. They were doing all their good deeds in order to be respected and honored by men; they wanted the acclaim men gave to them because of their good deeds. All those who followed the scribes and Pharisees in their hypocrisy came under the condemnation of this warning.

These hypocrites did everything to be honored or glorified by men. Men have now given them that honor, so they cannot expect to receive any rewards from God. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." The word translated "reward in full" is an accounting term. It was stamped on documents when an account was paid completely. It indicates "paid in full with nothing more coming." The account is closed. Not even a dribble carries over because the reward has been paid in full.

Notice that the abuse by the hypocrites does not mean the rest of us should stop giving. Some people decide they will stop going to a church because there are hypocrites there. Well, there are hypocrites outside the church, too, so now where can you go? It is not acceptable to say that since there are hypocrites who give alms, you will no longer give any more. If you decided not to give, it is true that you would not be a hypocrite who gives alms; you would simply be a hypocrite who does not give alms.

The same emphasis on motivation is in the next section about prayer. Even though there may be hypocrites who pray, that does not mean you should quit praying. It means you should quit praying as a hypocrite.

Instructions on Giving

Jesus then gives the positive side of the instruction: "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:3,4). One of the reasons why people like others to know what they do is because they like immediate rewards. They like to be stroked now; they like the pat on the back. If you do something faithfully day in and day out and nobody notices you, you may begin to think that no one really cares. But why are you doing it? Are you doing it so people will notice it and honor you for it? Or are you doing it because it will be pleasing to God and honoring to Him? If you are doing it to please God and honor Him, then you must wait until you see Him to get your reward. If you are doing it to please people, you can get your reward today. Again, it is a matter of motivation.

Why do you give? If it is to be noticed by men, you had better give with all the fanfare you can so that many will notice it and reward you. After all, since that is all the reward you are going to get, you had better get all you can here. But if you are doing it for God, it does not matter if anybody knows you do it or not, because God sees the secret deed, and He is keeping the account. You will be repaid in His presence. The point is, who are you attempting to please?

The Apostle Paul addressed the Macedonians on the same subject in 2 Corinthians 8:5. He said, "They first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God." After first giving themselves to God, then their giving to Paul materially was a by-product of their commitment to Jesus Christ. The issue is the same in Matthew.

Jesus is not saying that you can never give in public. People are generally very sensitive about giving, so some people interpret these verses to mean that they should never give in public. It is amazing how closed people are in the area of giving unless they want a little extra glory for it, then it is all right to publicize it! This verse does not say you can never give anything publicly. Keep in mind that the context always determines the meaning. If you interpret this to say that all giving has to be absolutely secret, then you have a problem because the next section of verses refers to secret prayer and you will also have to conclude that there is no place for anything but

secret prayer. Then you have a real problem because Jesus and the disciples prayed in public. Paul even recorded some of his prayers in letters he wrote.

In the New Testament you will find references to individuals giving publicly. Acts 4:36,37 records how Barnabas sold a piece of land and then came and left the money from the sale as a gift to the disciples in the presence of the whole congregation. Barnabas was not disobeying God in this instance. He had given his gift for God and he was honored for it accordingly. But in Acts 5 we read that Ananias and Sapphira tried to do the same thing, but they did it as hypocrites and were struck dead by God.

Ultimately, you cannot judge what I am doing because you do not know the motive of my heart. You cannot know why I preach a sermon. You can hope you know why I preach it, but you cannot really know. If I do it for the praise of men, that will cancel out any reward from God. I will receive no honor from Him if I do it for the honor of people. The motivation of the heart is the significant point.

Each of us needs to spend more time examining our motives. We can be very deceptive. The Jews were completely deceived by the scribes and Pharisees. The Jews thought for sure that these were godly men, but they were totally deceived. It depends on how good an actor, how good a hypocrite, a person is.

The point of the instruction regarding giving in secret is that giving is an intensely personal matter between you and God. Your motivation must be to please God and honor Him in what you do. Whether or not others are aware is secondary. What matters is that you do it because you believe God wants you to, because it is a part of your being submissive to Him. It is a means of your honoring Him. The fact that it does not matter whether or not others see your giving is an indication that it is a matter between you and God. If others never find out, that will be all right because God sees in secret, and He will reward you for it.

Praying As Part of Worship

Jesus moved on to another matter which was very precious to the Jews — prayer. Jesus said, “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I

say to you, they have their reward in full" (Matt. 6:5).

The fact that a person prays is not evidence that he is a godly person. The Jewish leaders were great "pray-ers," but their prayers were not acceptable to God. Notice the motivation for their praying: "So that they may be seen by men" (v. 5). It is not wrong to pray on the street corner; it is not wrong to pray in a public meeting. But it is wrong to pray anywhere if your goal is to be seen by men. The scribes and Pharisees loved to pray in public places because that was where men would notice them. They wanted people to say, "Wow, what a beautiful prayer!" They wanted people to regard their prayers as long, loud and lovely. Such would surely indicate a good relationship with God. But the problem was that their whole intention in praying was to convince people of this. If you work on it, you can pray long, loud and lovely. People will think it beautiful. But it does not mean God is listening. Even Christians sometimes fall into this pattern.

If others are around when we are praying publicly, we sometimes become conscious of them. I am concerned about this in public praying in church. Am I praying to the people in attendance or am I praying to God? We sometimes begin to evaluate one another's prayers on the basis of the theology they contain. Prayer is not to be a theology lesson, as though God needed a lesson in theology.

Sometimes we begin to structure our prayers for other believers. We realize that they are mature, so we try to pray with them in mind. When we do that, we are not really talking to God. We are talking to the people in attendance. If our goal is to get them to say, "That was a beautiful prayer," then their response will be our reward. Any future reward is canceled out. If that was your goal, do not expect God to do anything to reward you further.

Would you be embarrassed if you were called upon to lead audibly in public prayer? Some of the concern in such a situation is simply the fear of being in front of people. To be praying and directing your prayers to God does not mean that you will not be nervous when you pray in public. But keep in mind that you are talking to God, not to people. I can talk to God alone in my room, or I can talk to Him in the presence of others. The fact that others are around is secondary. You can talk to Him whether others are around or not. Prayer is an intensely personal matter.

When I was in college, I had a professor who did a terrible thing – terrible for several reasons, but mostly because it was so unbiblical. He would call on an individual to pray at the beginning of the class. Then after the individual had prayed, with knees knocking, and had sat down, the professor would announce, “Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have just had a perfect example of how not to pray in public.” The students went to that class every day trying to figure out who was going to be called on next. We tried to have our prayers all organized in our minds so that they would be acceptable to him. When we prayed in that class, we were not praying to God, we were praying to that professor. We were talking to him because he was evaluating us. We must be careful who we talk to in our prayers.

Instructions on Prayer

Jesus continued His instruction on prayer by saying: “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:6). This is an amazing verse to me, not just because it speaks about the personal aspect of prayer, but because we are promised rewards for praying biblically. You know, we often think, I would not want to do it for a reward. That does not sound very spiritual. But Christ Himself says that God will reward us when we pray biblically. As we do so, we are submitting ourselves to the Spirit of God and the Word of God. God will then reward us for what the Spirit will accomplish in and through us as we submit to Him, even in prayer.

Have you spent time in prayer talking to God today? Think about it. Prayer is an opportunity for God’s children to talk to Him personally. That is mind-boggling when you think about it. Prayer is perhaps the greatest privilege we can experience. That we, fallen human beings, should be redeemed and privileged to walk into the very presence of God with boldness, or confidence as Hebrews 4:16 says, and speak to God about whatever is on our minds is beyond our ability to comprehend. We can lay on Him the desires and burdens of our hearts and have Him listen with the desire to respond and give us the desires of our heart. That is amazing! Sometimes when I think about this I am dumbfounded that I do not spend every minute of every day in prayer. What a privilege! But notice how

this privilege gets warped and ruined. If we are not careful, we start praying to be noticed by men because we want them to think we are spiritual. Then our praying loses any impact.

There is nothing wrong with public prayers; there is nothing wrong with beautiful public prayers. Those who pray most beautifully in public are probably the ones who spend the most time in private prayer and are thus most comfortable talking with God. Sometimes it is hard to voice things audibly when we are not accustomed to praying audibly. I find it a good practice to pray audibly when I am alone in my room talking to God. But praying to God comfortably in an audible manner is not the issue. We need to be careful that we pray with the right motives. If we do, then God will give the proper reward.

Fasting As Part of Worship

The third area Jesus brings up is the subject of fasting: “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matt. 6:16). Jesus is again emphasizing that we are not to be like the hypocrites. Fasting involves depriving yourself of something. Usually we think of fasting as depriving ourselves of food.

Fasting was a general practice through the Old Testament, but the Old Testament Law demanded only one day of fasting – the Day of Atonement. The instructions for the Day of Atonement are given in Leviticus 16:29-34 and 23:26-32. Fasting was to express humiliation, humbling oneself before God. It was an acknowledgment of unworthiness and indicated that the individual was committing himself to the mercy of God. You should notice that Jesus neither commands nor forbids fasting. It is almost a moot point, a personal issue. In Matthew 9, we read that Jesus defended His disciples for not fasting. In Acts 13, we read that some believers fasted while seeking the will of God before the appointing of elders.

Jesus used the example of the hypocrites as a warning. He said that if you are fasting, you should not put on a gloomy face like the hypocrites. The hypocrites would neglect their appearance. They would put on sackcloth, which is a hairy garment, put ashes on their foreheads and go around looking glum. In Jesus’ day, the pattern

had developed that Mondays and Thursdays were fast days. The hypocrites tried to impress everybody with how religious they were by looking gloomy on these days. As people observed them, they concluded that such individuals must be very spiritual. But the reason they were doing it was in order to be seen by men. That was their reward! "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full" (Matt. 6:16).

Sometimes the question comes up regarding the appropriateness of fasting today. It is neither directed nor forbidden in Scripture. If you feel compelled by God to deprive yourself of something in order to devote yourself with more intensity to finding His will, that is a personal matter for you before God.

Fasting as discussed in Scripture has nothing to do with diet. Some people write books for Christians and talk about the merits of fasting. Fasting may have its merits for physical or health reasons, but that has nothing to do with what Jesus was talking about. He was teaching about fasting related to spiritual matters.

If you are seeking God's will about something and are depriving yourself out of conviction that this is what God wants you to do, it is sometimes hard not to let others know that. But we like to drop it in as a casual part of the conversation that we are depriving ourselves of something very important so they will know how spiritual we really are. If we work these comments into our conversation so others will know we are fasting, then that is our reward.

Motivation is important. There is nothing wrong if someone knows I am fasting. I do not have to keep it a big secret any more than I have to keep all of my praying a secret. But the issue is my motivation. Why am I doing without? If I believe God wants me to devote my time and energy to something else, that is good enough. But I do not have to draw everyone else in so they can see how spiritual I am. There may be an occasion when others will know what I am doing, but the point of the matter is my motivation for doing it. Is my motivation the fact that I believe God wants me to do it and the desire of my life is to please Him? Or is it because I want others to think I am spiritual? I am the only one who can resolve that question. I have to decide how someone else knowing about my fasting will affect my ultimate goal and motive.

Instructions on Fasting

Jesus then gives the positive side of the instruction: "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:17,18). The issue is, what really motivates me. Am I concerned about what people think about me or about what God thinks about me? Am I looking for the honor I can get from people or the honor God promises me? How can someone truly worship God and bow down before Him when he has one eye on people? Such an approach is hypocrisy. It is blasphemous to try to have a dual purpose.

It is important to understand that only those who have come into a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ can worship God. That is why the people described here are hypocrites. They have no relationship with God. God determines the terms of worship. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

Any time I discuss this area, people get upset because they think I am attacking other peoples' religions. That is exactly what Jesus is doing when He speaks to the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites. That would be like my naming the Protestant or Roman Catholic leaders of today and saying, "They are hypocrites!" Jesus' actions were offensive. But the standard for true worship has been established by God. Those who worship Him must worship first in spirit and second in truth. God's Word says that true worship must take place based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ as the One who died on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and rose from the dead because that penalty had been paid. The Book of Hebrews develops that in detail. One who says he is worshiping God but does not believe in Jesus Christ and His death on his behalf is a hypocrite. He is not truly worshiping God. Such a determination is not my judgment. The God he is trying to worship is the One who is judging. He says that to worship Him, one must worship in the realm of truth. If you are not doing that, you are not worshiping Him. You are a hypocrite.

The Issue in True Worship.

The tendency is to identify going to a certain place at a certain

time as worship. When someone argues that he has his church and you have your church, he is simply saying he has his building and you have your building. That is right! Some people go to a certain building without worshiping God while others go to another building without worshiping God. Going to a building does not mean you worship God. Singing certain songs does not mean you worship God. The requirement for worshiping God is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through faith and then submission to Him in all you are doing. Your actions must come out of a desire to please and honor Him.

The motivation must be in the realm of truth. True worship becomes an intensely personal matter between the individual and God. Sometimes that worship takes place in public, but worship still is an intensely personal matter. Sitting in an auditorium does not mean you are worshiping God. The only way to worship God is to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior. You must trust Him alone as the One who died for you.

Any time you do the same thing over and over, there is a danger you will begin to do it because of the routine. Why do you go to church? Is it because you are concerned about what people will think of you if you do not go? If you go to church to please people, you cannot go to church to honor God. If you go because people will think you are spiritual, you have your reward. Do not expect anything from God in time or in eternity.

Self-Evaluation

Every time I preach, I must ask myself why I am doing this. Am I preaching to please people? Or am I preaching what I believe God wants me to preach in order to please Him? If I know certain people are at church who will not like to hear what I am about to say, will I go ahead and say it because it is true and I believe God wants me to say it? Or will I not say it because those people will like me better if I do not?

We as believers in Jesus Christ must be constantly examining ourselves to be honest before God. None of us are everything God wants us to be. Praise God, our worship is acceptable if it is offered in submissiveness through Jesus Christ. That does not mean we are perfect. We have many shortcomings, but we must be constantly

evaluating the motives of our activities. Do we have a desire to be pleasing to God and to honor Him? Are we wanting to be submissive to Him?

What a privilege that human beings sitting on the face of this planet are privileged to honor God Himself. We have the opportunity to walk in a personal relationship with Him and live in such a way as to make a difference in eternity. Is it not amazing that so many people trade the rewards of eternity for the trite praise of men here and now? We are of all people most honored that we can invest our lives in those things which will matter in eternity. What we do now and our motives for doing it will determine whether or not we reap rewards in God's presence in eternity. That should be important enough that we could forego the praise of men if necessary in order to experience the rewards from God later.

This does not mean that you can never compliment someone for a job well done. We ought to encourage one another as believers. We can be thankful that God uses us in the lives of others to bring encouragement. Praise is appropriate as we have the opportunity to encourage one another, but we need to be careful that we do not begin to serve for the praise which will be given us. Rather, we must serve in order to please God.

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