

# The Life of Faith in the Kingdom

by John F. Walvoord

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*The life of faith in the kingdom involves living a life of secrecy, trust, and obedience to God, rather than seeking human praise or material wealth.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:1-33, Luke 11:1, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Kingdom Living", "Faith And Trust"

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## Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the life of faith as outlined in Matthew chapter 6, emphasizing the importance of performing acts of righteousness, such as giving alms and praying, in secret to receive open rewards from God. He highlights the significance of laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, stressing the need to prioritize seeking God's kingdom and trusting in His provision for the future. Walvoord also addresses the cure for anxiety, encouraging believers to trust in God's care for their needs and to focus on serving Him each day without worrying about tomorrow.

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## Transcript

In contrast to chapter 5, dealing mostly with moral issues, chapter 6 delineates the life of faith. Important in this life of faith are four main elements: (1) performing alms in secret and trusting God for open reward (vv. 1-4); (2) praying in secret and trusting God for open reward (vv. 5-18); (3) laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (vv. 19-24); (4) seeking the kingdom of God today and trusting God for His supply tomorrow (vv. 25-34).

### Giving Alms, 6:1-4

In the opening four verses, Jesus called attention to the ostentatious almsgiving which often characterized Jewry. In the kingdom, alms should be given secretly, but God would reward openly. The reference in verse 1 to "your Father which is in heaven" (cf. also 6:4) is one of seventeen references to God as Father in the Sermon on the Mount, and as Pettingill notes, this "must surely have sounded strange to Jewish ears," accustomed to thinking of God "as The Great and Dreadful God."<sup>38</sup>

### Instructions Concerning Prayer, 6:5-18

In like manner, instead of praying publicly in the synagogue and on the corners of the street, as was customary for the Pharisees, they were exhorted to pray in secret, trusting God to answer their prayers openly. Likewise, their prayers were not to be repetitious, as if repetition gained merit, but instead they

were to pray simply.

As an illustration, in verse 9, He gave them a sample prayer often called the Lord's Prayer. It is more properly, however, the disciples' prayer, that is, a prayer for beginners. As Ironside points out, "Jesus Himself could not pray it, for it includes a request for forgiveness of sins, and He was ever the Sinless One."<sup>39</sup> There is no indication that this prayer ever was repeated from memory in the early church or considered a part of its ritual. The same prayer, found in Luke 11, has minor variations and additions, including the closing clause in Matthew 6:13, which is not found in the more ancient manuscripts. According to Jesus, prayers should be addressed to God as the Father who is in heaven, thereby recognizing the disciples' relationship to God as His children. Worship of God is the essence of prayer, and the first petition is that God's name be hallowed or revered. In keeping with the context, the next petition is "Thy kingdom come," certainly including the future millennial kingdom but broad enough to include the contemporary spiritual kingdom. This is followed by that which would be in keeping with the kingdom, that is, that God's will should be done in earth as it is in heaven. The first three petitions are all aorist imperatives in the Greek text, pointed commandments to be fulfilled in full.

In verse 11, the petitions are changed to the first person, relating to human need. Included in the prayer was the petition for daily bread, representing all necessary temporal needs. Second, forgiveness is sought, assuming that the petitioner also forgives, although the reverse order is observed in the epistles; that is, we should forgive because we are already forgiven. In the family relationship, the other aspect is also true. The Christian already forgiven judicially should not expect restoration in the family relationship unless he, himself, is forgiving. Verse 12 does not deal with salvation but the relationship of a child to his father. This is followed by the petition not to be led into temptation, that is, into unnecessary enticement into sin, but rather to be delivered both from evil temptation and succumbing to it. The King James Version includes the doxology that to God belonged the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, certainly proper ascriptions, whether included in the original text or not.

In the verses which follow, further exhortation is given concerning the necessity of forgiveness in human relationships if we expect God the Father to forgive us. Again, this must not be interpreted as relating to the issue of personal salvation but rather to proper fellowship between the child and his father.

Contriteness of heart, however, should not be a matter of outward appearance which Jesus attributed to hypocrites, or those who are merely acting sad and who disfigure their outer appearance to indicate that they are fasting. Rather He exhorted them that if they want to fast, they should hide this from men by anointing their head and washing their face and doing their fasting in secret that God may reward them openly. The life of faith depends upon God and not men for recompense. Fasting today is neither commanded nor forbidden, and is beneficial only if practiced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Treasures in Heaven, 6:19-24

Important in Jewish thinking was material wealth. In His public ministry, Jesus repeatedly rebuked them for the prominence they gave to material wealth. A true subject of the kingdom, Jesus said, would lay up his treasures in heaven, where they would be impervious to the moth which would eat his beautiful silk fabrics, the rust that would corrupt his jewelry, and would be beyond the grasping fingers of thieves. The principle involved was that their heart would be where their treasure was. If their eyes were in an evil way coveting money and wealth, their whole body would be full of darkness, but if penetrated by the revealing light of eternal values, their whole body would be full of light.

The contrast between the darkness of covetousness and the light of faith and treasure in heaven carries over to the concept of two masters. Necessarily a choice must be made, and they must either regard a master with love and obedience or with hate and disobedience. So, similarly, a choice must be made between God and mammon, or money. As Tasker notes, "Men cannot serve (i.e. 'be slaves of') God and mammon (Knox 'money') at once, for single ownership and full-time service are of the essence of slavery."<sup>40</sup> In the kingdom, they must live for God and not for material gain, and in committing their treasures to heaven, they would put their trust in the God of heaven.

Cure for Anxiety, 6:25-34

The place of material gain in life carries over into the problem of anxious care. Because they could trust God for time as well as eternity, they were not to spend their time worrying about their provision of food and drink and raiment for the body. Like the fowl of the air, they were to trust divine provision; and like the lilies of the field, God would care for them. The argument was advanced that if God can care for the grass of the field, existing only for a day and then used for fuel for the oven, how much more will He clothe and care for those who are the objects of His great salvation? Although concern for earthly things characterized the unbelieving Gentile world, Christ reminded them that their Father knows their needs and that they should seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and that God would add the necessary temporal things to them. The chapter concludes, accordingly, on the note that they should not have anxious care about tomorrow but rather concern themselves with serving God today.

38 William L. Pettingill, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 68.

39 H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 63.

40 R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 76.

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