

Let The Bible Speak Series

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The Things God Puts First

Matt.6:33

One of the great challenges of life, is the task of arranging our lives according to those things most important to us. Learning to prioritize is a very difficult and often time consuming task. If one has several bills, but only so much money, which bill does he/she pay first? How is the determination made? In spiritual matters, man and God do not always see alike. Isa.55:8-9 "For my ways are not your ways saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways from your ways and my thoughts from your thoughts."

The purpose of our study is to discover some of the things God puts first.

I. The First Thing To Do

Matthew 23:26 "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."

The Lord charges that these people showed a fair exterior of conduct, while they are secretly practicing the most abominable wickedness. Two forms of such hypocrisy are mentioned by Jesus: (1) secret commercial dishonesties and (2) secret licentiousness. The Lord illustrates by saying they cleaned the outside of the cup and platter, but within, they are full from extortion and excess. The vessels for food and drink are used to enforce a moral lesson: While they cleansed these vessels, on the outside, they did not bother to wash the inside both of which were dirty. By the same token they appeared good on the outside, but inside they were dirty and evil. Their hearts were not right. The lesson being that they could never be pleasing to God until they "first" cleansed their hearts. The important thing was being right with God. Having a pure heart, not how they appeared outwardly. The same lesson is taught in 15:18-19 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders etc. (Not what goes in the mouth, but that which comes out is what defiles a man.) The heart must be cleansed before our lives can be clean. "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Prov. 23:7

II. The First Thing To Remove.

"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye..." Mt. 7:1-6

"Judge not," Jesus said. I do not have the right to judge another's motives.

How can we say that another is guilty of a sin, when we are guilty of the same sin in a magnified form? The first thing we must do is correct our own mistakes, then we can help correct others. From the teaching of Jesus here, we have several proverbs, that come down to us.

"He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones"

“The pot should not call the kettle black” and
“there is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it hardly behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us.”

No one is permitted by Jesus to hunt motes in this brothers eye, or faults in his brothers walk or character, while his own life is full of much greater sins. “Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?...thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?” Rom. 2:21-23. The first thing we need to do is make sure that we are living right, before we try to correct someone else.

III. The First Thing To Remember.

Mt.5:23 “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the alter and there rememberest that thy brother has ought against thee. leave there thy gift, first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.”

When one’s conscience is aware of sins committed against a brother, the first duty is to make it right with the brother, a duty more imperative, even, than that of worship, and which takes precedence over it. The place of worship should be a place of remembrance. Prayer and worship are often hindered by the remembrance of sin. God will not accept our worship when we are at odds with our brother. We must do all we can to resolve these difficulties.

God’s plan is simple: “Go”

1. when a brother has ought against such a one as this passage describes, “GO”
2. when such a one has been wronged by a brother Mt.18:15-17 “GO”
3. If any man be overtaken in a fault Gal.6:1 “GO”

This is God’s procedure. When followed the odds are that we can resolve the issue. When not followed the odds are that we will complicate the issue.

IV. The First Thing To Seek.

Mt.6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

In the preceding verses Jesus talks about the anxiety the Jews had for the necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter. He points out that God cares for the birds, grasses, flowers etc. And that being the case, surely he will care for his people.

Benjamin Franklin exclaimed before the Constitutional Convention that gave birth to the US of America, “God governs in the affairs of man; and if a sparrow cannot fall to ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?”

The Gentiles or pagans all seek “after these things.” The Hebrews, on the other hand, were a people presumably prepared in heart to discern spiritual things and to receive the Messiah when he should appear. Yet Christ found them much like the rest of mankind. Could it be that we today are no better than they?

The divine appeal is made for these people to put first things first.
The Kingdom of God should be first:

1. in importance,
2. in point of time,
3. and in emphasis.

The righteousness men should seek is of Christ, not their own. God's righteousness is His plan for the justification of sinners, which exceeds in kind the asserted righteousness of Pharisaical self-justification. Rom. 10:1-3 "Brethren my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." The Jews were ignorant of God's plan for the redemption of man. Hence they sought to establish their own plan.

"And all these things shall be added" The kingdom looming in the not too far future was to be prized above all else. Seeking it and accepting God's commands was the important thing. Secondary to that were the food, shelter, clothing etc. These would be added as an estate to His children.

The Kingdom of God should always be number one to a Christian.

Ahead of family, friends, and associates.

Ahead of job, money, and advancement.

Ahead of fun, games, and recreation.

Ahead of trips, vacations, outings.

Ahead of everything.

V. The First Thing To Give.

2Cor.8:5 "And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." These brethren from Macedonia had sent a donation to the needy saints in Jerusalem far above what Paul had accepted, and far above their ability to give. The key to their liberal giving is explained in the phrase "first gave their own selves to the Lord." Giving oneself to the Lord begins at baptism. And if truly an act of total commitment, every requirement of God will come without hesitation or bitterness from that point forward. The reason people have such difficulty serving the Lord is because they haven't given themselves to the Lord. It is not hard to give your time, talents, money when you belong to the Lord. One can abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, when he/she belongs to the Lord. 1Cor.6:19-20 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." Immodest dress is not a temptation to one who has "first given himself or herself to the Lord. Coming to church services will come easy for the same reason. Giving yourself "first" to the Lord is a must. It is the key to successful and dedicated living for Jesus.

VI. The First Step In Winning The Lost.

Is to tell someone else. John 1:40-42 "One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrews Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. YOU shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

John 11:28 "And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying "The teacher as come and calleth for you" As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him."

Regarding the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, we are told:

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified. "He told me all that I ever did."

Tell someone else about Jesus. This is personal evangelism. Personal evangelism is the life blood of the church. There is no substitute for every saved person trying to save someone else. In Mark 5 the demoniac of Gadarea, was healed by Jesus. The demon was cast out. This man who dwelt among the tombs. This man who cut himself and broke the chains that bound him. When healed by Jesus he was told "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled."

It is truly amazing what could be accomplished if we only put first those things that God puts first.