



HOLDING YOUR MIND IN YOUR HANDS

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"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.

In Greek, the words "take heed" mean to "hold your mind toward this," or to "pay attention to this."

In Matthew 5, Jesus pointed to false teaching, especially from the teachers of His day—the scribes and Pharisees. False teaching results in false or wrong actions, because they create false expectations. Every action has results. Good actions have good results, and evil actions have evil results.

In Matthew 6, the second part of Jesus' sermon on the mount, He dealt with improper motives and false piety. His first three examples of the latter were cases

of hypocrisy. The fourth case was similar, but it was about pretending to trust in God while in reality trusting in man.

- In verses 2-4, He spoke about giving alms.
- In verses 5-15, prayer was the subject; and this included the Lord's prayer.
- Verses 16-18 were about fasting.
- And then verses 19-21 were related to wealth.

To the Hebrew way of thinking, giving alms was considered a righteous act, since it encompassed showing mercy and kindness to the needy. But the word "righteousness" in this verse is not a quality in man from which flow acts of mercy but rather something righteous that a person does by himself—something that is completely different from the imputed righteousness that comes from believing in God.

In Matthew 5:20, Jesus had already told the disciples that their righteousness needed to exceed that which was demonstrated by the scribes and Pharisees. These Jewish leaders practiced the kind of manmade righteousness that Jesus was talking about in the above verses. He did not say that good works were useless, but that they were of no value if they were done to find favor with God.

The fifth beatitude that He had given was, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Matthew 5:5. In other words, do not think that your being merciful merits some kind of credit with God through which He will be merciful to you and forgive your sins (your unrighteousness). Real mercy that is exercised by man is the result of his having received God's mercy. It is not something that man produces. Its origin is divine. Jesus had already said that God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:45, 48.

False piety is like a washed pig or a whited sepulcher. It is something that people put on. It is fake, a novelty. In today's world, it is Halloween, Hollywood, and Disneyland. There is nothing real about it. It may have provided amusement for a moment, but it leaves the pockets empty and the mind confused and unable to discern the call of duty or the voice of God.

Later, Peter asked Jesus, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him [or, how much mercy is enough]? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times sev-

en." Matthew 18:21, 22. The Jews believed that three times were enough. Maybe Peter was still thinking about what Jesus had said, "... Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20. If the Pharisees said that three times were enough, then seven times would more than double that amount and certainly be acceptable. But Jesus said that being merciful was not an accounting function but, rather, a state of mind and heart. It is not something that is done for God or to display before men, but rather something done by God for the blessing of men.

Furthermore, when Jesus said, "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matthew 6:3), He was not saying that everything had to be done in secret, because in Matthew 5:16 He said that men would "see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He was referring to the motive, such as doing things in front of people for them to see. If a person accepts such praise from people, he will receive nothing from God. The reward he receives will be solely the applause of men. In the apostle Paul's words, "... Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23.

Yes, we may be flattered when someone praises us for a good deed, instead of giving all praise to God for what He has done through us. And, yes, this praise may be a stimulus for us to do greater and more wonderful things. But Jesus made it clear in Matthew 7:22, 23, that it is not a matter of keeping count. It is an attitude—a choice.

It has been said that more men have been destroyed by praise than by criticism. Building on praise is building on

sand. Sand is what computer chips are made of, and that whole house is eventually going to collapse. What are we trusting in? Who are we looking to? How will we answer the following question of Jesus? "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John 5:44.

Our minds and eyes need to focus on God. Each of us holds his mind in his hands; that is, we choose what we behold. What is our motive? That is the question. No matter how great one's deeds may be, God said that they are completely ruined if they come from anything that points to self. To Him, they are not righteous. All our "righteousnesses are as filthy rags," because they are human righteousnesses, not God's.

In Matthew 6:1, Jesus' first words were, "Take heed." You are holding your mind in your hands. Do not do works of righteousness before men to be seen by them. If you do, you have the reward you want; but it is not a reward from the Father.

The word "reward" is used four times in the first five verses of Matthew 5. The implication is that, for sure, true works of righteousness will receive a reward from the Father. There is a reward laid out in heaven, and it will be paid in due time.

The truth is, we have already received the greatest reward—acceptance with God and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. With that in mind, we have a debt to pay; and since Jesus is not here, we bestow our love, care, concern, and gratitude on those around us. This is not seeking the praise of men, but pointing them to God, because we have



been purchased at an enormously high price—the sacrifice of Jesus' own life.

The matter should now be clear and simple. In performing good works to be seen by people, there will be no reward received from the Father. Man's own good works may be pleasing to men; but if God is not the One receiving the glory, such works are an abomination to Him.

Thus, it is really a matter of a choice between two rewards—the transient reward of praise from men or the eternal praise and blessing from our Father which is in heaven.

Many seek the former; so few, the latter.

Augustine said that "the love of honor from men is the deadly bane of true piety; other vices bring forth evil works, but this brings forth good works in an evil way." In other words, such vices seem to accomplish good works but then destroy them.

It is true. We hold our minds in our hands. Yet the choice is not in our hands, but in our hearts, and also in our eyes. When we behold Him crucified for us, we are saved. Then, being saved, we become vessels of honor to carry others to the throne of grace, where they find peace and salvation in Him.

"The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, expressed in character, is an exaltation above everything that is esteemed in earth or in heaven. It is the very highest education. It is the key that opens the portals of the heavenly city. This knowledge it is God's purpose that all who put on Christ by baptism shall possess. And it is the duty of God's servants to set before these souls the privilege of their high calling in Christ Jesus." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 97.





lightened, and are gifted by God with the power to discern the matchless love and wonderful charms of Jesus Christ. They can never feel lonely or comfortless....

When a man becomes one with Christ, he has the mind of Christ. He is no longer antagonistic to God's law, but lives in obedience to all the commandments. One with Christ in obedience to God's commands, he walks in the footsteps of the Saviour. But should he walk regretfully, because in his union with Christ he is called upon to practice self-denial and self-sacrifice? Think of what the Prince of heaven did to manifest His love for His Father. He resigned His position as Commander in the heavenly courts, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that humanity might lay hold of humanity, and divinity grasp the throne of the Infinite. This He did to perfect the redemption of the human race. Those who receive Him are adopted into the royal family as sons and daughters of God. They are made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ to an immortal inheritance.

Love to Jesus Christ leads to an acknowledgment in words and works of His goodness. Christ has declared that the cross, which makes the line of demarcation between His people and the world so distinct that the world may not question the choice, is not a cross of discouragement but a cross of salvation.

There is a right side, and a wrong side. Let each ask himself, On whose side am I standing? Those who do not choose Christ range themselves under the banner of darkness with the great apostate, who in heaven refused to obey God. In the garden of Eden he deceived the holy pair, and the floodgates of woe were opened upon our world.

On the side of obedience Christ stands, giving to all the invitation, "He that will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." John 15:7, 8. All those who are true and loyal to God bear fruit, not the fruit of transgression, but the fruit of a glad, willing obedience. They are filled with thankfulness that they are not numbered with those who have chosen the wide gate and broad road as more convenient than the road cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. -Manuscript 14, 1900.

Ellen G. White

God is the fountain of life and power. He can make the wilderness a fruitful field for the people who keep His commandments, for this is for the glory of His name. This is His witness to Christianity. He has done for His chosen people that which should inspire every heart with praise and thanksgiving; and it displeases Him that so little praise is offered. He desires to have a stronger expression from His people, showing that they know they have reason for joy and gladness.

Isaiah tells us what God is doing for us. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law." Isaiah 42:1-4.

What greater encouragement and assurance than this could the Lord give His loyal, commandment-keeping people? Have we not every reason for changing our attitude toward God? Is it not our duty to show the world that we appreciate the love of Christ? As we produce the fruit of thanksgiving, we bear living evidence that by connection with Christ we are placed on vantage ground....

How plain is the distinction drawn. Worldlings have placed their whole attention on the gaining of worldly advantages. The mind is filled with the

selfish thought, How can I secure these advantages for myself? How can I obtain more money? This is the god they worship. They do not stop to think of the riches of which no earthly power can deprive them. They see not Christ, neither know Him. They do not realize their great need of a Redeemer. They do not pray. They put Christ out of their life as much as possible.

"But ye see Me; because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19. Christ is with you, to enlighten your minds, to lead you to call upon Him. As you do this, He will hear your prayers and will purify your hearts. You will behold Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Those who follow Christ do not walk in accordance with the ways of the world. They are not conformed to the world. They ask God for Christ's sake to help them, and they receive the help they ask for. They are en-



Disaster Preparedness

Part 3



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In the previous two articles on disaster preparedness, we covered two common scenarios encountered in the event of a calamity. The first one addressed the preparation that is needed if staying at home is the safest option. The second one concentrated on being ready if evacuation is mandatory. Here we will consider the steps to take and the materials to have in the car in the event of disaster striking while one is on the road (commuting to work or school) and it is not safe to return home or to drive to another destination.

Ideally, one should always keep his car's gas tank at least half full. While this practice would require visiting a gas station more frequently, consider doing this when a particular disaster is more likely to occur during certain seasons where you live. Almost daily we see Biblical prophecy being fulfilled as natural disasters occur more frequently and with greater intensity. When local authorities are interviewed, they often use nearly identical expressions: "the level of destruction [from this fire, flood, earthquake, or hurricane] is unprecedented; our resources are overwhelmed." We are promised God's protection especially in the last days, but we should make it a habit always to be prepared to help ourselves and those around us.

When disaster strikes, family members may find themselves being at some distance from each other. That is why, as mentioned in previous articles, it is very

important to have prearranged places to meet, perhaps at a friend or relative's home or out of town where the effects of a disaster are hopefully less severe or nonexistent. Listed below are supplies and materials that are recommended to have in the car at all times. The items on the list will be similar to those mentioned in previous recommendations. The only difference is that the car survival kit is usually smaller than the kit(s) one would prepare for evacuation for the whole family. Most of the car kit should fit into a daypack, so that if it becomes necessary to leave the car, one can carry the small daypack, leaving his hands free for other tasks.

- Bottled water
- Non-perishable foods, such as trail mix, energy bars
- Cell phone charger
- Transistor radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Fire extinguisher
- Ice scraper
- First aid kit, first aid manual
- Goggles
- N95 mask
- Work gloves
- Essential medications
- Rain gear
- Sealable plastic bags
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- Hand sanitizer
- Paper towels
- Small toolkit
- Pocket knife
- Multipurpose tool
- Space blanket, sleeping bag
- Change of clothes, in layers
- Walking shoes, extra socks
- Pen, pencil, paper

Some of the items listed are not necessarily intended to be carried in a small pack, if it becomes necessary to leave the car. For example, a fire extinguisher, ice scraper, and tool kit can remain in the car. It is suggested that you continue to think about your particular circumstances and surroundings and do further research. Refer to your local emergency agencies for specific information related to possible disasters in your area.

References

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