

The Sermon on the Mount

Part 13

I. Introduction

- a. Jesus' teaching on subjects that make us all uncomfortable continues today
 - i. If we've learned nothing else, we should have learned a long while back that Jesus didn't just preach theological messages to get a lot of "amen's"
 - 1. He brought messages down to the individual to help them in their service to God
 - a. Today's is no different

II. Commentary

a. **Matthew 6:16-18**

- i. *"Moreover, when you fast..."*
 - 1. Most of us could stop here and skip to the next section as whatever is about to follow isn't applicable to us...because we DON'T fast
 - 2. Fasting is defined in Webster's 1828 Dictionary as simply "the act of abstaining from food"
 - 3. Jesus' instruction here seems plain that fasting is a part of serving the Lord
 - 4. Fasting was required at certain times of the year under the Mosaic Law in connection with certain feasts
 - a. Certainly, we have been freed from the burden of the Mosaic Law
 - i. However, fasting is still instructed in the New Testament after the ascension of Christ, as we will see
 - 5. Jesus fasted 40 days when the devil tempted Him (**Matthew 4:2**)
 - a. Some may say, "well, He was able to do this because He was God's Son"
 - i. Certainly, His faithfulness to the Father far exceeded ours
 - 1. However, He did this as a man since *"afterward He was hungry"*
 - b. This is an example to us as to how we are to face difficult circumstances
 - 6. The disciples didn't fast during Jesus' ministry (**Mark 2:18-20**)
 - a. He was questioned by the disciples of John and the Pharisees as to why this was
 - i. He responded by saying that they weren't fasting while He was with them but would after He was gone
 - 1. Certainly, this shows that fasting is for us today
 - 7. Paul fasted often (**2 Corinthians 11:27**)

- a. It appears that many of these fasts, however, were involuntary
 - i. That is, Paul simply didn't have the means to fast
 - 8. Fasting often accompanied prayer in major decisions and events (**Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23**)
 - 9. Fasting was listed as one of the few reasons a husband or wife would deprive their spouse of the marriage relationship (**1 Corinthians 7:5**)
 - a. This must be for a determined amount of time
 - i. This, of course, requires that it is temporary
 - 10. So, fasting is not required at certain times in accordance with any type of feast
 - a. However, it certainly is to be practiced by Christians today
 - i. No doubt, we miss a blessing when we do not fast
 - ii. When we fast, it is nothing to flaunt in front of others to show them how spiritual we are
 - 1. Nothing should ever be done for this purpose in the life of a child of God
 - 2. Those that do this are hypocrites
 - a. As with the previous passage concerning prayer, they do this to be seen by others
 - i. Their reward is here on Earth
 - 1. This will not be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - a. This again shows that our motives for service are important
- iii. As with prayer, fasting should be between us and the Lord
 - 1. This does not mean that we may not have a partner or partners in prayer
 - a. This, however, should be kept secret as much as is possible
 - i. As fasting is much more meaningful in private, so fasting will be as well
 - 1. As with prayer, our Heavenly Father knows all that is done in private and He will reward our efforts which are truly done for the purpose of drawing closer to Him
 - a. This is the purpose of fasting (and prayer)
 - i. As we said earlier, we may fast in times of despair
 - ii. However, even then, fasting will bring us to accept God's will for our lives rather than our own
 - iii. God gives comfort at such times