

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness J. Christ's Righteous Practices In Contrast To Unrighteous Practices 5. The Righteous Versus Unrighteous View Of Living By Faith (Matthew 6:25-34 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount provided valuable insight on God's true righteousness, what Israel's religious leaders greatly lacked as seen in their dead traditionalism.
- B. To illustrate the contrast between the Pharisees' unrighteous practices with truly righteous deeds, Jesus gave six illustrations, and the fifth illustration deals with the issue of the righteous versus unrighteous view of living by faith in Matthew 6:25-34 et al. We study this passage for insight, application and edification:

II. The Righteous Versus Unrighteous View Of Living By Faith, Matthew 6:25-34 et al.

- A. Immediately following His Matthew 6:24 claim that one could not serve God and money, Jesus began verse 25 with the preposition *Dia* with the accusative case for *touto*, "this," indicating that He was about to make a point that was based upon His claim about not serving God and money. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 20)
- B. Thus, *to overcome the idolatry of serving money instead of God*, Christ directed His hearers not to "be anxious" (*merimnao*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 506) for their "earthly life" (*psuche*, Ibid., p. 901-902), what they might eat or drink, nor yet for their body, what they would wear, v. 25a. One's life consisted of more than what he ingested or what he wore, so he should be more concerned about the totality of his life, including his relationship with the Lord, Matthew 6:25b.
- C. Accordingly, Jesus taught His hearers the importance of not trusting in accumulated wealth for one's livelihood security in place of trusting in God, a repetition of the thought in Matthew 6:24, and He developed and illustrated this concept in Matthew 6:26-34 (as follows):
 - 1. God takes care of all living creatures, illustrated in how birds do not sow, reap or gather a harvest into barns, but God feeds them, and people are far more important than birds, Matthew 6:26 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 185).
 - 2. Besides, anxiety over one's life is futile, for no one even by wise planning can extend his "age" (*helikia*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 345) by one "cubit," figurative for "hour," Matt. 6:27 NIV, ESV. [The KJV translation of adding a cubit to one's stature here errs (Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 662, s. v. "*pechus*").]
 - 3. Christ then referred to the issue of being anxious about clothing, noting that the lilies of the field were clothed with a beauty that exceeded the magnificence of Solomon's attire, that if God so clothed the lowly lilies of the field that grow today but are soon cast into the oven, He certainly would clothe His people who are far more valuable to Him than the lilies of the field, Matthew 6:28-30.
 - 4. Thus, Jesus taught His hearers not to "be anxious" (*merimnao* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 21) about what they would eat or drink nor how they would be clothed, things for which the pagan Gentile world seeks, for their heavenly Father knows that they had need of all these things, Matthew 6:31-32.
 - 5. Rather, they should seek the interests of God's kingdom and His righteousness as a first priority, and all these things livelihood necessities would be added unto them through God's oversight, Matthew 6:33-34a.
 - 6. After all, "(e)ach day has enough trouble of its own" without adding to it worry over a livelihood, v. 34b.
- D. However, as in His comments on money in Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus did **not** remove God's requirement that a believer obtain a livelihood to fulfill his duties to his dependents as stated in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 1 Timothy 5:8 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10 as we noted in our last lesson in this series! Christ's comments in Matthew 6:25-34 dealt with the issue of *anxiety* over acquiring a livelihood, not actually earning a livelihood to provide for one's dependents! The problem with *anxiety* is that it constitutes **idolatry** where one has come to rely on material possessions instead of the Lord for security, the issue Jesus addressed back in Matthew 6:24!

Lesson: *Though God holds us responsible to work for a living to care for the livelihood needs of our households, He condemns ANXIETY over our OBTAINING these provisions as SIN. Our TRUST for our livelihood should NOT be in our accumulated provisions themselves, but in the Lord Who provides them for us (1 Timothy 6:17).*

Application: *(1) If we are anxious about our livelihood provisions, we must confess this anxiety to God as a form of sinful idolatry and return to viewing the Lord as our provider for such needs. (2) To avoid the sin of idolatry regarding our livelihood needs, may we focus on the will of God and see Him meet our needs, Matthew 6:33.*