

# The Sermon on the Mount

## Session IV

### A Christian's Piety

#### Matthew 6:1-18

Thus far in the SOM, Jesus has addressed the essential elements of Christian *character* in the beatitudes. Then he moved to address the Christian's *influence* in the salt & light metaphors. From there he turned to address the Christian's *righteousness* in the six illustrations. In chapter 6 Christ elaborates further upon *righteousness*. In this section his focus is placed upon the actual practice of righteousness.

Each time we open a passage of Scripture, we should begin by reading the entire passage and not just a single verse. Most of our bibles are now broken into sections or passages. Across the span of time, scholars have done this to help us as we read. We must realize that these separations are not part of the original text. We have added the verse numbers and the section breaks to aid in study.

While these are additions of man, they are typically very helpful to us in both locating Scripture and in guiding a disciplined study of the word. There are a number of things that we want to look for when we look at a passage:

1. **Overall fit into the broader context:** Is this a “stand-alone” passage, or does it belong within a larger discussion?  
*Can you name an example of each of these?*

Think about the parables of Jesus. While they do clearly belong to the overall context of the Gospel they are found in, they are generally a self-contained teaching from Christ. Very often they are a teaching based upon a preceding question. But nonetheless these are usually more self-contained teachings. Another example from the OT would be the Ten Commandments.

Our passage today in Matthew 6:1-18 however is an example of a passage that clearly fits within the confines of a larger discussion. The broadest picture is that of the sermon itself, a message of true heart-felt discipleship which should exist in every believer. More precisely, Jesus has just finished a series of illustrations where he expounded upon how the religious leaders of their day had completely missed the true meaning of certain OT laws. Now he is flowing directly into how he expects his followers to practice their righteousness or piety toward God.

2. **Form & Structure:** All teachers and writers have a style or a method in which they teach and write. These are designed to help us delineate the points and to focus specifically upon them in order to grasp the true meaning. We are going to discuss this a bit more in just a moment, after we read the verses. For now, keep in mind that there is always a method to the author's writing. Look for it, find the patterns. Locating these will help you better grasp the message.

3. **Scope of the message:** Jesus has just demonstrated the danger of taking the scope of God's word too narrowly. In each of the six illustrations of chapter five we saw that there is a true heart-message contained in these examples. A message that takes the true interpretation / application to a much larger context than rote obedience. In 6:1-18 we are going to see this again. We are going to see Jesus employ examples that are to be taken and applied in a broader context.

We are now going to read Matthew 6:1-18, but as we do I want everyone to look for the points we've just discussed and we will talk about them:

*So, I asked you to look for how these verses fit into those three areas we discussed above: "overall fit into the broader context; identify form & structure; and scope of the message". Tell me what you see in this passage on these points??*

Regarding the first point, overall fit of the passage into the broader context; I think we have already discussed this point. This is a passage that clearly fits within the confines of a larger discussion of the entire Sermon on the Mount. The broadest picture is that of the sermon itself, a message of true heart-felt discipleship which should exist in every believer.

More precisely, Jesus has just finished a series of illustrations where he expounded upon how the religious leaders of the day had completely missed the true meaning of certain OT laws. They had failed to take into account how God was truly focusing toward the heart of every believer when He gave His laws and directives. Simple mechanical / ritual obedience was never God's intent.

Now Jesus is flowing directly into how he expects his followers to practice their righteousness or piety toward God. As we will see, the "heart message" will continue here into the believer's worship.

Regarding "form & structure" there is much to note here:

1. **Opening:**

Christ begins this new section of the SOM in v.1 by setting the stage, or establishing his purpose statement for the following passage. As I mentioned in the opening, the verse numbers and passage divisions / headings are all additions of the translation scholars, not the original work of the biblical writer. In the English Standard Version (ESV) which I have used in this course, we see three examples of this, each delineating the sections of this larger passage in v.1-18.

Verse 1 is included in the section noted as "almsgiving". *Reread this verse to yourself and tell me if you think it belongs specifically to that portion of the passage.*

Verse 1 is actually setting the context for all three examples Jesus uses and is not specifically tied to the first example of "almsgiving". It is really the opening verse for this larger passage.

2. **Three Examples:**

Jesus is choosing three common examples of how believers practice their righteousness and worship God. Remember, these are only examples. The broader message of each example is to be placed into the context of every believer's overall personal worship of God.

- A. Giving
- B. Prayer: Note that Jesus expands his discussion on prayer by adding the Lord's Prayer.
- C. Fasting

3. **Jesus' presumption:**

*There is a presumption in each of these examples. What is it??*

Each of the examples begins with "**when**" not "**if**". In the original Greek language there is no doubt of this translation. The Greek term for "when" is ὅταν, whereas the Greek terms for "if" are εἰ or εἰάν, therefore there is absolutely no doubt of Jesus' intended meaning here. Giving, praying, and fasting were not considered "**optional**" manifestations of practicing righteousness, they were **assumed as "givens"** for the believer!!

4. **Formula:** In each of the three examples, Jesus will do three things:

- a. First, he will offer a description and a denunciation of a particular form of practicing righteousness "for showmanship".
- b. Secondly, will give speak to the rewards of such false-righteousness.
- c. Finally, he will present the contrasting picture of what true righteousness should look like.<sup>1</sup>

Let's take these in sections:

**Opening: The "Warning": Mt.6:1**

A. **General Theme:**

*What are your thoughts on this verse? Why do you think that Jesus made this statement immediately following the six illustrations of chapter 5??*

I want us to look at three things in this verse regarding its overall theme: **First** the theme of the entire passage of v.1-18 is focused on **individual motivation**. This is in keeping with the overall **heart-focus** that is threaded throughout the Sermon on the Mount. **Secondly**, v.1 represents the **general principle** that is in focus. A principle that deals with how we, as believers, are to practice our worship with our hearts focused on worship, not on being seen by others!! **Finally**, Jesus moves to support this principle with **three individual examples** in v.2-18.<sup>2</sup>

The placement of this passage, immediately following the six illustrations, is very *intentional*. Think about it: Jesus has just given great detail regarding a *Christian's righteousness* in the illustrations. **Now** he is turning to an explicit *warning* to us that essentially goes to *not taking our righteousness too far*.

*Does that seem a bit odd to you? Wouldn't you think that Jesus would want us to "be on fire" for God in everything we do? Is he about to instruct us to effectively "hide" our faith??*

I think we all know that this is not the case. Let's look below at a comparison of two verses within the Sermon on the Mount that help demonstrate this point:

B. **Conflict with Matthew 5:16?** Let's take a look at 6:1 beside 5:16:

**6:1:** *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven".*

**5:16:** *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven".*

*This is two verses from within the Sermon on the Mount. Do these verses contradict one another?? On the surface they seem to conflict, what are your thoughts?? How do we reconcile this?*

There is no contradiction between these verses. On the surface, the wording appears contradictory. However, as we know, we must always interpret a passage within the context it is given. Each of these verses are presented in very different contextual settings. Jesus is speaking against two very different sins with each of these verses.<sup>3</sup>

1. **Cowardice:**

Matthew 5:16 is part of the Salt & Light Metaphors discussion. Recall that in this passage Jesus is speaking against our tendency toward "cowardice" and the fact that we often do not *let our light shine before men*. That is to say that we do not tell others about the great Savior that we know so they too may come to know him.

2. **Vanity:**

In 6:1 (and the balance of the pericope), Jesus is warning against the human tendency toward vanity or pride.

A.B. Bruce once penned an excellent quote to address this very point:<sup>4</sup>

*"we are to show when we are tempted to hide and we are to hide when we are tempted to show."*

He continues by noting that our good works must be public so that the light of Christ shines; our religious devotions must be secret lest we boast about them.

C. **Grammatical Structure of v.1:**

*What is the key verb in the opening of v.1?*

**"Beware"**. The term loses a bit in translation from Greek to English. In most of our English translations we simply see the term **"Beware"**. However, in Greek the term is a 2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural, imperative of command. As such the subject of the verb is **"you"**. Additionally, the command is strong, it is an imperative verb with an interpretive range that includes: **"You BEWARE!!!"** and **"You pay very close attention to!!!"**.

*Re-read the previous verse (5:48). Why do you think that Jesus follows this statement with his warning in 6:1??*

Referring again to Stott's point on **vanity**, Jesus has just issued the command for his followers to **"be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"**. Yet knowing the human, sinful propensity for vanity and pride, he is now warning us **not to let our righteousness go to our heads!!**

Let's turn now to the three examples:

**Example 1: Almsgiving: Mt.6:2-4**

*What is the "assumption" Jesus makes in this first example??*

Notice that he opens v.2 with **"Thus, when,,,"** NOT **"Thus, if,,,"**. As we said earlier, the Greek is very clear on this matter, Jesus is making the assumption that his followers will give to the needy as a part of their worship of God.

*Above we discussed that Jesus employs a specific "Form & Structure" in each of the three examples. What are the components of this structure here in the first example?*

1. **What is being denounced:** *What do you see that Jesus is denouncing here??*

In this first example, Jesus is denouncing the practice of drawing attention to the act of giving to the needy. He is centering in on the believer's motivation for giving. Evidently in the context of 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Jewish life, it was common for people of means to draw

attention to their acts of giving. This is what Jesus is denouncing!! Giving is assumed, but the act of showmanship is denounced!!

We need to focus on a couple of key words in this passage in order to more clearly understand what Jesus is saying. To do this we will look for a moment at the Greek text:

- a. ***"give to the needy"***: The term Matthew employs is *ἐλεημοσύνην (eleemosune)*. The term refers to the act of giving to those in need, particularly *the poor*. It is often rendered as *"almsgiving"*. The term "almsgiving" is not a term that we use very regularly in the English language today. There are other translations that render this term more clearly in our modern English. The ideas being presented are, *"give to the needy"* or *"a gift of charity for the poor"*. Each of these conveys the message of Jesus a bit more clearly for us today.
  
- b. ***"the hypocrites"***: Here the Greek term is *οἱ ὑποκριταὶ (hoi hypocritai)*. Literally translated the terms mean *"the hypocrites"*. In the earlier form of ancient Greek, in the times of Aristotle and Socrates, this term was used to refer to an *"orator"*. All languages change over time and words are used differently. As the Greek language progressed into the earlier stages of Koine Greek (common Greek) of the period from Alexander the Great through the first centuries AD, this term came to refer to *"an actor"*. By the time of Christ ὑποκριταὶ (hypocrits) came to be used for *"those who treat the world as a stage"* or *"one who lays aside his true identity and assumes a false one"*. In the context of the theater, this is no issue. However, in the context of the practicing one's faith, religious hypocrisy is a serious problem for it represents *"one who deliberately sets out to deceive others with respect to religious activity"*.

## 2. The rewards of false righteousness:

The second part of the formula Jesus uses is to name the limited rewards of such false righteousness.

***What does Christ say the "reward" is for those who practice hypocritical giving?***

By the sounding of trumpets, they sought to gain the attention of men. Consequently, their *"reward"* is just that: Merely the *praise of men who witness their act*. Not the pleasing of God to whom our acts of worship should be directed!!

## 3. The contrast to true righteousness:

***What is Jesus saying about "how" we should give to those in need?? What does true righteousness in giving look like??***

When we look at v.3-4 we see that Jesus presents an analogy of what true righteous giving should look like. When we really think about it, there are really only three possible motivations of the heart in giving:<sup>5</sup>

a. **Seeking the praise of men:**

We've already explored this one in the course of the word study on hypocrites. Two examples in John's Gospel point out this very clearly:

John 5:44

<sup>44</sup> *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?*

John 12:42-43

<sup>42</sup> *Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

They wanted the praise of men, more than to truly worship God through manifested acts of charity.

b. **Preserving anonymity, but quietly congratulating ourselves:**

This is a bit more difficult to grasp. We can easily "*give in secret*", but this does not fully accomplish explaining the intent of the passage which is devoted to the "*motivation of our hearts*" for giving.

*How do we know that Jesus even had this concept in mind in this passage?*

Look again at v.3: Jesus' intent in the example of *secrecy between the right and left hands* is to demonstrate the fact that our giving is not for us to take "*inward or self-gratification*". It is to be so singularly focused toward God that even our own body parts do not know that the giving has taken place.

c. **Desirous of divine approval:**

Verse 4 makes clear that the only true motivation that we should have in our acts of charity is for them to be seen by the Father. If they are truly acts of worship, as they should be, then it is assumed that they are for God, not anyone else. Jesus further assures us that God sees all things. Even the smallest acts are witnessed by God.

One last point on this example: *What do you think Jesus means when he refers to rewards in v.4??*

Many people have a trouble with this verse because they think it implies a form of giving that is *motivated* by the concept of *rewards*, regardless of where these rewards come from:<sup>6</sup> 1) Rewards (praise) from men. 2) Internal rewards. 3) Divine rewards. Why should we give with any expectation of *reward*?

The problem is when we think like this we are thinking of "rewards" in purely the "earthly sense" of rewards like "trophies". Instead, we should be seeing rewards here in the context of pure "love". Our giving is not so we can be rewarded at some point with "something". Instead, our giving is to be done in a purity of love whose "reward" is seeing a need that is met.

### **Example 2: Prayer: Mt.6:5-6**

We are going to first deal with the example of prayer, here in v.5-6. Then move to the third example, fasting. After that we will return to v.7-15.

So, let's approach this portion of the passage in the same manner that we did the previous one.

***What is the assumption Jesus is making in this example??***

The assumption is prayer!! Obviously Jesus expects his followers to pray, just as he expects us to give to those in need. ***But, is that all there is to it?? I prayed this morning,,, so I'm good to go until tomorrow?? Is that the message here??***

The answer here is simply "No", that is not all there is to it. Remember, the entire message of the sermon is heart-focused, not just a series of instructions for rote obedience. This carries forward into this example on prayer.

However, there is an even deeper component here. So much so that Jesus even went to the trouble to expand more deeply into this example, than the other two, through what we commonly refer to as the Lord's Prayer. ***Why do you think that he did this for this example??***

Every single act of worship we do (with the correct motivations) draws us closer to God. However, prayer is the most personal aspect of worship we have. Prayer is where we come before the very face of God and commune with Him. When we are truly in the study of God's Scripture and practicing deep prayer,,, these are perhaps the most intimate forms of worship we can have.

***Form & Structure: What are the components of form and structure in this example?***

1. **What is being denounced: Tell me what you see....**

Jesus is denouncing the practice of some who seemed to position themselves in very conspicuous places for public prayer. But this can raise some questions: ***Jesus makes several references to what we might refer to a "form" in prayer. What are they and how should these be taken today?? Is there anything wrong with praying on a street corner? Does this negate public prayer? Is "standing" prohibited in prayer?***

The answer to these is quite obvious. We must continue to remind ourselves that Jesus' focus here is to address the believer's "***motivation***" for performing an act of worship. As



has been the case throughout the Sermon on the Mount, the "*heart-condition*" is the focus. To take a rigid position on these statements is to become guilty of the same type of "*legalism*" that the Pharisees did.

2. **The rewards for false righteousness:** *Tell me what you see here?*

The second component of Form & Structure in these examples is identifying the false rewards for the denounced practice of praying on the street corners. Jesus makes his point very clear: The motivation for the prayer in this example was to be seen by men, *and that is the extent of their reward!!!*

3. **The contrast to true righteousness:** *What is the true righteousness that Jesus points us toward?*

The contrast is seen in v.6 where Jesus is commanding that we go into a secret place in order to pray. Again, as we saw in the first example, Jesus is focusing here on our motivation. He used the example of public prayer NOT to say that all public prayer is wrong. Instead to show that public prayer *that is motivated by vanity* of wanting others to "see our righteousness" is the wrong motivation.

The one, who goes into the inner-most part of his home, locks the door behind him and prays, is symbolic of one who wants to get away from every distraction and truly commune with God. This is the correct motivation we must have in EVERY prayer, public or private.

**Example 3: Fasting: Mt.6:16-18**

I'm going to move a bit more quickly through this example. The same points we've discussed on the previous two can guide us through this example as well. Instead, we will spend a bit more time on this one in discussing personal application.

1. **Assumption:**

As in the first two examples, the assumption here is that Jesus expects his followers to fast.

2. **Form & Structure:**

*Let's begin by you telling me what the three points of form & structure are for this passage.*

The form and structure of the third example is the same as the previous two:

- a. **Denunciation:** Jesus opens by explaining how the hypocrites' motivation for fasting is to be seen by others. They accomplish this through facial expressions.
- b. **Reward for false righteousness:** Christ once again shows that when our motivation is guided by being seen by men,,,,, we have received our rewards in full!!!
- c. **Contrast to true righteousness:** Jesus then he moves to how fasting should actually be practiced by the believer who has the proper, godly *motivation*.

### **Application:**

*Do we see or hear much focus on fasting in the church today? Let's get personal: When was the last time you fasted??*

No. Most Christians today do not routinely practice fasting. We have largely lost the concept of fasting as an integral part of worship. In order to properly grasp this example, we need to understand how fasting was emphasized in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism. Jews routinely fasted. In fact the Pharisees actually fasted two times per week. Yet their *legalistic motivations* were made clear in the *manner* by which they fasted.

*How does Jesus reference the inappropriate manners that the hypocrites used in their fasting?*

They *disfigured their faces*. Additionally, Jesus notes their intentions in doing this were "*that their fasting may be seen by others*". They totally missed the concept of fasting as a form of *worship dedicated to God*. They were merely concerned with practicing their religious acts for others to see!!!

*Does fasting still have a role in our worship of God today?*

Yes!! Where the Pharisees went to the extreme of *over-emphasizing* the outward manifestation of fasting before others, we for the most part have *under-emphasized* the importance of true godly fasting in drawing us closer in our relationship with God!!

*Let's do a little testimony time: Tell about a time when you fasted over a particular matter and what was the outcome?*

### **The Model Prayer: Mt.6:7-15**

#### **v.7-8:**

Across the span of time, this portion of the sermon has been referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" and as "The Model Prayer". As we mentioned earlier, these heading notes in our Bibles are translator notes to help us. I tend to favor the title: "The Model Prayer" because I think that is exactly what Jesus was doing: He was modeling how we should practice the worship of prayer!

Notice that he uses v.7-8 to open this section by once again denouncing a common practice of this time period. Jesus is denouncing the act of: "*do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do,*".

*Is the message here: "Keep it 'short and sweet' because God is busy"??*

Of course not!!! This is another example of where understanding the cultural context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century is important. In the pagan religions of the Gentiles in this period, it was common for

them to pray their prayers to each of the various gods. In addition, they thought that if they did this AND repeated their prayer to each god several times, they had a better chance of it being heard.

To the Jews, these actions appeared as random babbling. In fact Matthew uses a word here that is EXTREMELY rare. It has only been found in this one usage both inside and outside of Scripture: βατταλογέω (*battalogo*). It literally means “to babble” or “to chatter repetitively”.

### **v.9-15:**

Now Jesus turns directly to teaching his followers how he wants us to pray. He knew the vital importance of prayer to the believer’s relationship with God. I want to use marriage as an *analogy*: We all understand the importance of the many facets of the marriage relationship. *What are the primary components of a healthy marriage relationship?*

A healthy relationship with our spouse is comprised of numerous components. Communion / communication are perhaps among the, if not the single most important components of the marriage relationship. Obviously some relationships are closer than others. The marriage relationship is the closest one we have on this earth. God ordained it in Genesis 2. It is there described as the “*two become one flesh*”. Likewise Jesus relates his relationship to his followers (the Church) as his “bride”. Thus I think it is fitting for us to compare how important communication is in the marriage relationship to our relationship with God.

Jesus knew that *prayer* is the primary means of how we communicate with God. As such, he takes time in the midst of this sermon to demonstrate *how we should pray*:

*Do you see a "pattern" within the prayer?*

We are going to examine the prayer by breaking it into *six petitions*:<sup>7</sup> Notice that the first three petitions express how we should worship in praise of God’s magnificent glory. Then, the last three petitions turn toward believers petitioning God for their own needs.<sup>8</sup>

In these first three petitions we should note that the important pronoun used is *σου (sou)*. This is the genitive (possessive case) 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular “*your*”.

#### 1. **Petition 1: His Name:** (v.9)

Note the *personal designation* for God: “*Our Father*”. This was not completely unheard of in Jewish literature, but it was very rare. Jesus was drawing his followers to the point that there is a *close and familial relationship* between the believer and God, not just a “*Lord and subject*” relationship. God is personal!! He is NOT some impersonal “Ultimate” or “Uncaused Cause” that the philosophers love to banter about!! He is “our Father”!!!

Next, he brings out the designation of God: “*hallowed (or Holy) is your name*”. The prayer opens with the believer acknowledging the holiness of God!!

#### 2. **Petition 2: His Kingdom:** (v.10a) *Whose kingdom? What does this imply?*

The kingdom is already His!! It is not something that He will “conquer” and “take”. God is already sovereign, He is already King!!!

*So, why do you think Jesus phrases this as if the coming kingdom is something yet to happen?*

First of all, the grammar here is not “future tense”. This petition is not referencing a time when God will be sovereign, He already is!! Yet, while God has always been sovereign, there is a clear picture in Scripture of the future time when sin will be completely judged and the creation will be set right from the sin that presently consumes it!!

This petition acknowledges God’s present sovereignty and simultaneously anticipates the consummation of salvation history.

3. **Petition 3: His Will:** (v.10b,c)

Clearly this petition is tied to the previous and the coming kingdom. However, it also allows believers of the present era to acknowledge that God has a *will for their lives in this time!!*<sup>9</sup>

We now turn to the last three petitions of the Model Prayer. We will see a shift in the important pronouns used in these verses. The shift will be away from the σου “your” of the first three petitions; to the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural ἡμῶν (humon) and ἡμῖν (humin), “our” and “us” respectively.

4. **Petition 4: Our Physical Needs:** (v.11)

There is a great deal of work that can be done on this petition that we simply do not have time for. Let me show you how the Greek is difficult to translate into English in this verse.

<sup>11</sup> τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον ·  
<sup>11</sup> *The bread ours the daily or day to day recurring you give to us this day*

The scholars of the early church often had a problem with the first personal petition of the Model Prayer being interpreted as a plea for food. Therefore, as was often done in that time, they tended to use allegory to interpret this verse as a reference to the “invisible bread”, represented as the Word of God or to the Lord’s Supper.<sup>10</sup> *What are your thoughts on this approach??*

The Reformers took the more literal approach which is preferred here in that the request for “daily bread” is simply an acknowledgment of our complete dependence upon God to meet every aspect of our physical needs.<sup>11</sup>

5. **Petition 5: Our Spiritual Needs:** (v.12; 14-15)

Jesus has noted our complete dependence on God for physical needs in the previous petition. Now he turns to our spiritual needs. We are sinners. As such we have a sin debt to God that only He can forgive.

But let's also look at the latter portion of v.12 and the expansion found in v.14-15. *Is Jesus establishing a "tit-for-tat" system through the petition and its expansion? Is he effectively saying that God will only forgive us when we first forgive others??*

No! Forgiveness is as indispensable to the life and health of our souls as food is for our bodies!! We must always keep in mind the *heart-focus* of the Sermon on the Mount. God is faithful to forgive all who come to Him in true heart-felt repentance. However, such true repentance is evidenced by a forgiving spirit.<sup>12</sup>

6. **Petition 6: Our Moral Needs:** (v.13)

Jesus has addressed our physical and spiritual needs. Now he turns to the moral aspect of our lives.

*Tell me what you think Jesus is saying to us in this petition??*

Once again this is a verse that can be a little tricky, both from a Greek grammar perspective and from a theological perspective. The general sense of what is being said is that sinners who have been forgiven of their sins, have a genuine desire to be delivered from its tyranny in the future.

*But there are objections commonly raised about this verse. Can you spot them??*

First, the Greek term here *πειρασμός* (*perasmos*) can be translated either as "testing" or "temptation". James 1:13 clearly notes that God cannot "tempt":

*James 1:13*

*<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*

Therefore many translations render this term here in Matthew as "test" instead of "tempt". These translators contend that even though God does not entice us to sin, He does "test" our faith and character.

This translation approach has merit. However, perhaps a better approach is to translate *πειρασμός* (*perasmos*) as "temptation". This understands that the "leading into" temptation must be taken in conjunction with plea to "deliver us". Additionally, the grammar for "evil" is actually τοῦ πονηροῦ which is consistent with "the evil one", which is consistent with the translation of ὁ πονηρὸς in Matthew 13:19.<sup>13</sup> In this vein of translation, the plea is for God to deliver us from the temptations which Satan leads each of us into.

A second common objection is that James 1:2 notes that temptations and trials are good for us, they strengthen our faith:

*James 1:2*

*<sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,*

In this ESV translation, the Greek word is the same root word as in Matthew, *πειρασμός* (*perasmos*). *So, why would Jesus teach us to pray against something that he knew was really good for us??*

The likely approach is that Jesus was focusing us in the prayer toward the overcoming of temptation, not the avoidance of it.<sup>14</sup>

We will stop here and pick up with the balance of chapter six in the next session.

## Literature Cited

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<sup>3</sup> Stott, John R. W., and John R. W. Stott. *The message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian counter-culture*. Inter-Varsity Press, 1992, 126-27.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, A.B., *The Expositor's Greek Testament: Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. W. Robertson Nicholl editor, Hodder, 1897, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Stott. 128.

<sup>6</sup> Stott. 131-32.

<sup>7</sup> Carson. 66-75.

<sup>8</sup> Stott. 146, 148.

<sup>9</sup> Carson. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Stott. 148.

<sup>11</sup> Stott. 149.

<sup>12</sup> Stott. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Stott. 150.

<sup>14</sup> Stott. 150.