

6:14 *For if you forgive-* The Lord guessed that His teaching to ask for forgiveness “as” we forgive others would be radical and hard to accept. The Lord’s teaching in the prayer [“as we forgive”] was clear enough, but He repeats it twice (also in :15), so that there be no possible difficulty in interpretation. He rarely spells things out this specifically and with such immediate repetition. The vital, eternally vital need to forgive others is underlined. And the Lord repeats this teaching later in His teaching, with the further detail that unless we forgive others “from your hearts”, we will not be forgiven (Mt. 18:35; also in Mk. 11:25). This chronic and urgent need to forgive others, aware that *how* we forgive them is the basis of *how* God will forgive us, leads to the question of whether we should forgive others without their repentance. If we first demand specific repentance, then this is the basis upon which we are asking to be judged; and we all, surely, sin without repentance, sometimes because at the time we do not perceive the sinfulness of our behaviour.

Paul alludes here in Eph. 4:32. Jesus said: "If you forgive, you'll be forgiven". Paul subtly changes the tenses: "You've been forgiven already, so forgive". It's as if Paul is saying: 'Think carefully about Mt. 6:14. Don't think it means 'If you do this, I'll do that for you'. No. God has forgiven you. But that forgiveness is conditional on the fact that in the future you will forgive people. If you don't, then that forgiveness you've already been given is cancelled. This is what Jesus really had in mind'. This would suggest a very close analysis of those simple words of Jesus, using all the logic and knowledge of Biblical principles which Paul had. Note that the command to forgive our debtors when we pray (Mt. 6:14) is applied by Paul to the need to forgive those who sin against us in the ecclesia (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

6:16 *Hypocrites... disfigure their faces-* There is a semantic connection between these words. A *hupokrites* was a play actor, one who wore a mask. These hypocrites create false faces for themselves, that is the idea- their disfigured faces are but as a mask. The Greek for “disfigure” occurs only five times in the NT, once here- and twice in the next few verses, 6:19,20, where the Lord warns that external material wealth ‘corrupts’, destroys itself, or is disfigured. By disfiguring their faces, they were destroying their faces, destroying themselves because they wanted to appear other than they were.

*Appear unto men-* s.w. 6:5, also in Mt. 23:27,28. To act in a way so as to spiritually impress men is especially distasteful to the Lord. The issue of what other churches, ecclesias or individuals will think of us is not to pay any part in our decision making and action. We are living, thinking and deciding in the loving gaze of the Father and Son. The wonder of that should mean that all fear of human criticism or desire for human approval plays absolutely no role.

6:18 *Which is in secret*- Gk. 'the One who is in secret / hidden'. The hiddenness of God is in the sense that He specifically looks at the hidden man of the heart (1 Pet. 3:4). This is the sphere in which He operates and sees.

*Openly*- Who we will eternally be in the Kingdom, is who we were secretly in this life. What we think about as we fall asleep, as we travel, walk down streets... this is the essence of the life in Christ. The change of nature we will experience at the Lord's return will simply be a physical manifestation of who we are in spirit in this life. We will be made manifest [s.w.], declared openly, at the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:13). This means that we will be preserved as we spiritually are in this life. This means that the development of our spiritual person is of paramount importance, because that is how we shall eternally be. The Lord goes right on to warn against materialism (:19,20). But that is in the context of the paramount need for the development of spiritual mindedness. It is petty materialism which is the greatest enemy of this development- the cares of this life and the attainment of material wealth are what crowd out spiritual thinking. The treasure, the most important thing in our life, is our "heart", our thinking (6:21; "the good treasure of the heart", 12:35). Building up spirituality is placed in opposition to building up material wealth.

6:19 *Lay not up*- see on 6:18 "openly".

*Rust corrupts*- James 5:2 alludes here and states that wealth is already rusted and moth-eaten. So this perhaps was the Lord's idea here, although the grammar is unclear. The idea of gold is that it doesn't rust. What appears to be permanent material wealth is not, and is already rusted in God's eyes.

*Break through*- Literally, 'dig through'. Relevant to the earth houses of the very poorest people. The Lord's return is going to break up the house of those not looking for His return (Mt. 24:43 s.w.). It may be that 'thieves' is an intensive plural referring to the great thief, whom Jesus likens to Himself in Mt. 24:43. In this case He would be saying that He will take human wealth anyway at the last day- so we should give it to Him now and not seek it.

Because we know people (and brethren) who are richer and more wealth-seeking than we are, it's fatally easy to conclude that therefore we aren't rich, therefore we aren't materialistic. This is part of the subtle snare of materialism; that we all think that this is an area where we're not doing too

badly; that really, we don't care *that* much where we live, or what the furniture's like, or whether we have money to take a holiday... But remember, our attitude to materialism is the litmus test of all our spirituality. None of us should be so quick to say that we're OK in this area. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break (Gk. dig) through and steal" (Mt. 6:19) was spoken to a huge crowd of Jewish peasants. The Lord wasn't only referring to the few rich men who might be hanging around on the edge of the group. He was talking to all of them. He knew their mud walled homes which thieves could so easily dig through. That little cheap bangle, that ring, thinly buried under the bed mat after the pattern of Achan, that prized tunic... the petty riches of the poor which they so strove for, which *to them* were priceless treasures. This is what the Lord was getting at; and His point was that *every one of us*, from beggar to prince, has this 'laying up' mentality. He is almost ruthless in His demands.

6:20 *Lay up*- The idea is of incremental growth. It's as if spirituality, both in personality and deed, is carefully noted in Heaven as it occurs.

6:21 *There*- Gk. 'to there'. The direction of our heart is towards where our treasure is. If our treasure is in Heaven, with God, then our life direction will be towards Him and not towards earthly things. The emphasis of the Lord throughout the Sermon has been on the state of the heart. The overall direction of our heart, our thinking, is all important. That direction cannot be both to earthly things and Heavenly things. Laying up treasure on earth cannot be done whilst having treasure in Heaven. The emphasis of course is on 'laying up', wilfully incrementing, not the mere possession of wealth which the Lord may send into our hands. 'Laying up' means to increment, not to merely possess. But it is the overall direction of our hearts which will be the deciding factor in our eternal destiny; 'to where' they are directed. And we can direct them by deciding what our treasure really is, and where it is.

6:22 *Single*- Healthy. This observation about single-mindedness follows on from the Lord's teaching about the overall direction of the human mind, observing that we cannot have two overall directions for our heart. Our eye must be single, the entrance of light must be only from one source. God gives to all men with a single eye (James 1:5 Gk.); and in response, we too must be single eyed in our giving (Mt. 6:22 s.w.- this is one of James' many allusions to the sermon on the mount). If our eye / world-view / outlook on life is *single* [s.w. 'simple' in the passages quoted], then our whole body / life will be full of light (Mt. 6:22). In daily work, in private reflection and planning for our immediate futures and present needs, there must be a direct and undiluted belief of the teachings of the Gospel, connecting those teachings to our daily life of faith. In this simplicity of the life of faith, in a world that makes life so complicated [especially for the poor], we will find humility. With that simplicity and humility will come peace, and the

ability to pray with a concentrated and uncluttered mind, without our thoughts wandering off into the petty troubles of life as we frame our words before Almighty God each morning and night.

I've always sensed that the more complex a person, the harder it is for them to be generous. But we are all commanded to be generous to the Lord's cause, knowing that nothing we have is our own. And I am not only talking to wealthy brethren. *All* of us have something, and all of us can give something to our brethren. Consider how the poor believers of the first century such as Corinth [amongst whom there were not many rich or mighty, Paul reminds them] collected funds for the poor brethren in Judea. There is a Greek word translated "simplicity" which is related to the word translated "single" here in Mt. 6:22. It occurs eight times in the NT. Five of these are in 2 Corinthians, written as it was in the context of Corinth giving funds for the Jerusalem poor. Consider how the word is translated:

- Paul had "*simplicity* and Godly sincerity" (2 Cor. 1:12)
- They had "*liberality*" (2 Cor. 8:2)
- "*Bountifulness*" (2 Cor. 9:11)
- Their "*liberal distribution*" (2 Cor. 9:13)
- He feared lest they be corrupted from "the *simplicity* that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Evidently Paul saw a link between generosity and the simplicity of the faith in Christ. It doesn't need a lexicon to tell you that this word means both 'simplicity' and also 'generous'. The connection is because the basis for generosity is a simple faith. Not a dumb, blind faith, glossing over the details of God's word. But a realistic, simple, direct conviction. This is why Paul exhorts that all giving to the Lord's cause should be done with "simplicity" (Rom. 12:8- the AVmg. translates 'liberally'). Give, in whatever way, and don't complicate it with all the ifs and buts which our fleshly mind proposes. Paul warns them against false teachers who would corrupt them from their "simplicity"- and yet he usually speaks of 'simplicity' in the sense of generosity. Pure doctrine, wholeheartedly accepted, will lead us to be generous. False doctrine and human philosophy leads to all manner of self-complication. Paul was clever, he was smart; but he rejoiced that he lived his life "in simplicity...by the grace of God" (2 Cor. 1:12). If our eye is single (translating a Greek word related to that translated 'simple'), then the whole body is full of light (Mt. 6:22)- and the Lord spoke again in the context of generosity. An evil eye, a world view that is not 'simple' or single, is used as a figure for mean spiritedness.

6:23 *Evil eye*- This was an idiom for mean spiritedness. It continues the theme of materialism from the previous verses. To follow materialism is to be mean spirited- towards God. Speaking in the context of serving *either* God *or* mammon, the Lord uttered these difficult words: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness... how great is that darkness!" (Mt. 6:19-22). All this is in the context of not being

materialistic. The Lord is drawing on the OT usage of "an evil eye" - and consistently, this idiom means someone who is selfishly materialistic (Prov. 22:9; 23:7; 28:22; Dt. 15:9). The NIV renders some of these idioms as "stingy" or "mean". A single eye refers to a generous spirit (1 Chron. 29:17 LXX), and a related Greek word occurs in 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13 with the sense of "generous". So surely the Lord is saying that our attitude to wealth controls our whole spirituality. Whether we have a mean or generous spirit will affect our whole life- an evil [stingy] eye means our whole body is full of darkness. Just let this sink in. If we are materialistic, our whole life will be filled with darkness, whatever our external pretensions may be, and there is a definite link to be made here with the "darkness" of rejection. The riches of Jericho are described with a Hebrew word which means both a curse, and something devoted (to God; Josh. 6:18). This teaches a powerful lesson: such riches of this world as come into our possession will curse us, unless they are devoted to the Father.

*6:24 Serve two masters-* It would be too simplistic to interpret this as meaning that we are either totally serving the Lord, or not serving Him. Paul seems to have thought a lot about this verse because he refers to it several times in Romans, basing his entire Romans chapter 6 around the idea that we do not serve sin as a Master (Rom. 6:6). But he goes straight on to lament that in reality, he does serve "the law of sin" with his flesh, but "I myself" serve the law of God (Rom. 7:25). And he concludes the letter by warning that some do not serve the Lord Jesus (Rom. 16:18). Perhaps Paul is writing partly in response to confusion about the Lord's words- for we keep on sinning, yet He taught we can only serve Him alone. And his perspective is that we ourselves as believers are totally devoted to Him as our only Lord and Master. But the flesh, which we do not identify as the real self of the believer, continues to serve the sin principle.

*Hate the one-* The Lord wasn't just trying to shock us when He offered us the choice between hating God and loving Him (Mt. 6:24 cp. James 4:4); He was deadly literal in what He said. The Lord hammered away at the same theme when He spoke of how a tree can only bring forth one kind of spiritual fruit: bad, or good (Mt. 7:18,19). James likewise: a spring can either give sweet water or bitter water (James 3:11). We either love God, or the world. If we love the world, we have *no* love of God in us (1 Jn. 2:15). The man who found the treasure in the field, or the pearl of great price, sold *all* that he had, in order to obtain it. If he had sold any less, he wouldn't have raised the required price. These mini-parables are Christ's comment on the Law's requirement that God's people love Him with *all* their heart and soul, realizing the logic of devotion. Samuel pleaded with Israel: " Serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things [i.e. idols]" (1 Sam. 12:20,21). If we don't serve God whole-heartedly, we will serve the idols of this present age. There's no third road. If we are God's people, we will flee from the false teacher (Jn. 10:5). If we do anything other than this, we reflect our basic attitude to God's truth.

*Hate... love-* Because Israel were in covenant with God, *therefore* they were not to make covenants with the other nations, and marriage is mentioned as an example of this (Ex. 34:10,12). In his repetition of this part of the law in Deuteronomy, Moses gave even more repeated emphasis to the fact that our covenant with God precludes any covenant relationship with anyone else: "Thou shalt make no covenant with them... neither shalt thou make marriages with them... for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all (other) people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord ...set his love upon you ...chose you... because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers... the Lord hath brought you out (of the world) with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen... know therefore that the Lord thy God, he God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments... and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them; he will not be slack to him that hateth him. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments..." (Dt. 7:2-11). The wonder of our relationship with Yahweh is stated time and again. To marry back into Egypt, the house of bondmen from which we have been redeemed, is to despise the covenant, to reverse the redemptive work which God has wrought with us. In this context of marriage out of the Faith, we read that God will destroy "him that hateth Him", and repay him to his face. On the other hand, not marrying Gentiles was part of *loving* God (Josh. 23:12,13). So according to Moses, whoever married a Gentile was effectively hating God. It is possible that the Lord had this in mind when He taught that we either serve God and hate the world, or we love the world and hate God (Mt. 6:24). This isn't, of course, how we see it. We would like to think that there is a third way; a way in which we can love God and yet also love someone in the world. Yet effectively, in God's eyes, this is hating Him. Doubtless many Israelites thought Moses was going too heavy in saying that those who married Gentiles were hating God. And the new Israel may be tempted to likewise respond to the new covenant's insistence that our love of God means a thorough rejection of this world. Whoever even *wishes* to be a friend of the world is an enemy of God (James 4:4).

*Hold to-* There are only two masters whom we completely serve; we hold to either mammon, or God (Mt. 6:24). The idea of "holding to" in Greek implies holding *against* something else; the result of holding to God is that we are against everything else. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Mt. 12:30)- rather than being passively indifferent. Men reacted to the Lord in ultimately one of two ways- they either truly believed on Him, or supported the Jews in murdering Him (Jn. 11:45,46). Those who apparently believed on Him but kept it quiet were forced by the cross and resurrection to make their commitment one way or the other [and serious reflection on the memorials of these things in bread and wine leads us to the same decision]. So much for the philosophy of balance! The Hebrew word for vacillate (translated "dissemble" in AV) also means to go astray; indecision and indifference are

effectively decisions against God's way. The Hebrew language often reflects God's characteristics and attitudes.

*Despise*- The Greek word is usually used elsewhere about despising other believers (Mt. 18:10; 1 Cor. 11:22; 1 Tim. 4:12; 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:10). Loving God involves loving our brother, and despising our brethren means we do not love God but rather despise Him.

*Mammon*- When the Lord spoke of the impossibility of serving two masters, He personified the one as "Mammon", the antithesis of God. He goes on to define what he meant: "Therefore... take no *thought* for your life... which of you by *taking thought*... why *take ye thought* for raiment... therefore take no *thought* saying, What shall we eat?... seek ye first the Kingdom of God... take therefore no *thought* for the morrow" (Mt. 6:24,25,27,28,31,33,34). Clearly the Lord saw "Mammon", this personified anti-God, as an attitude of *mind*. He had the same view of 'Satan' as we do: a personification of sin in the human mind. He also saw seeking "the Kingdom of God" as somehow parallel with serving God rather than mammon. We would wish there were some third category, God, mammon and something in between; as we may idly speculate that it would suit us if there were three categories at judgement day, accepted, rejected, and something else. But both then and now, this very minute, this isn't the case. A deep down recognition of this will have its effect practically. If we are serving God, let's not give anything to mammon, let's not play games, juggling and using brinkmanship.

There is fair evidence that in God's eyes, our attitude to materialism is the epitome of our spirituality. The Lord places before us only two possible roads: the service of God, or that of mammon (Aramaic for riches / wealth, Mt. 6:24). We would rather expect Him to have said: service of God or the flesh. Indeed, this is the choice that is elsewhere placed before us in the NT. However, the Lord evidently saw "mammon" as the epitome of all the flesh stands for. It is probably the view of many of us that while we have many areas of spiritual weakness, materialism is not one of them. But according to the Lord, if we are reading Him rightly, our attitude to the flesh generally is reflected in our attitude to wealth. This is why the Bible does have a lot to say about the sacrifice of 'our' material possessions; not because God needs them in themselves, but because our resignation of them to His service is an epitome of our whole spirituality.

Mt. 6:24 is alluded to in Tit. 1:9. Holding to God as your master rather than mammon is achieved through holding on to His word. Paul sees one application of serving mammon as acting in a hypocritical way in order to please some in the ecclesia (Mt. 6:24 = Gal. 1:10).

