

Conclusion

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not seek glory for ourselves. Rather our intentions should be that others would glorify God. We are servants of God. Jesus teaches that there are people in the world that seem to be practising righteousness but actually deep down in their hearts God sees the wicked intentions behind their actions. People might see the outward appearances and works of people but the Lord sees straight through it (1 Sam. 16:7) and warns us not to have selfish intentions behind our actions (Matt. 6:1-2). After Jesus told the people that they cannot serve both money and God, we read that “The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He [Jesus] said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.” (Luke 16:14-15)

Practicing ‘righteousness’ is the good deeds that God tells his holy people to carry out (Matt. 5:16). We do this not to earn our salvation, but on the contrary, since we are already sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14) we love and serve people as Christ did. Those that want to be seen by others when they donate, pray, or fast do it out of a selfish nature and want to be honoured by people.

When we donate to the needy, we should always try to do it in secret. Lest when we carry out an honourable act, it turns into a dishonourable and wicked deed through an impure heart. Since Jesus talks about the context of ‘the poor’ we should not be disheartened when a wife or a husband blesses each other with gifts nor parents to their children. However, they should always examine their heart and the intentions behind their actions. Is it a selfish giving, in order to receive praise or is it a self/less giving?

Christians should be giving to the needy in one way or another. This might be through tithes, serving the less fortunate, or sponsoring those in need etc. These should be done without “announcing it with trumpets” or posting it online to the whole world saying “look at my good works”. When we give in secret, it takes away the temptation of wanting to be honoured by people. It becomes easier to seek the approval of God rather than mankind.

“You cannot expect to be paid twice, if therefore you take your reward in the applause of men, who give you a high character for generosity, you cannot expect to have any reward from God... [And when you give] Do it so by stealth as scarcely to know it thyself; think so little of it with regard to thyself that thou shalt scarcely know that thou hast done it. Do it unto God; let him know it.” - Charles Spurgeon