

The Priorities of God

Introduction

There are great rewards in following God's commands, but most of His promises are conditional. Before we can receive the great rewards offered, we must first obey the conditions. No more is this more apparent than in this scripture from Matthew.

The Scripture: Matthew 6:25-33 (TAB)

"Stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, and about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life greater [in quantity] than food, and the body [far above and more excellent] than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth more than they? And which of you by worrying and being anxious can add one unit of measure...to his stature or to the span of his life? And why should you be anxious about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field and learn thoroughly how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his magnificence (excellence, dignity and grace) was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and green and tomorrow is tossed into the furnace will He not much more surely clothe you, oh you men with little faith? Therefore do not worry and be anxious, saying, 'What are we going to have to eat?' or, 'What are we going to have to drink?' or 'What are we going to have to wear?' For the Gentiles (heathen) wish for and crave and diligently seek after all these things; and your heavenly Father well knows that you need them all. But seek for (aim at and strive after first of all His kingdom, and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right]), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides."

Jesus knew how to capture the attention of His listeners. Which one of us would not have been alerted when Jesus promised to show us how we would never have to worry about the necessities of life? Hardly a person alive has not worried about these things at some level. This would have been particularly true in the culture of Jesus' times when so many lived at the subsistence level.

1. What does Jesus tell His listeners? _____

2. What does He compare us to? _____
3. How do we compare to them in the Father's eyes? _____

4. What does Jesus tell us about worry? _____
5. What assurance does Jesus give His listeners? _____

6. What must be our top priority? _____

Never having to worry about what to eat and wear! That certainly would have brought most of His listeners to attention. Jesus even told them and us how to make this happen. We will never have to worry about the necessities of life again if we will first seek after the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we ever wanted to learn what God's priorities are for us, I think we can safely say they are contained in this piece of scripture. God wants us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Jesus said much the same thing in another scripture.

The Scripture: Matthew 11:28-29

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

7. Who is Jesus speaking to in these verses? _____

8. What does He promise them? _____

9. How does He describe Himself? _____

Again we have a picture of God's priorities. He will give us rest if we will come to him and take His yoke upon us and learn from Him.

Let's spend a minute comparing God's priorities with the world's priorities.

Referring to the scripture in Matthew, once again, what are God's priorities? _____

10. What are man's priorities? _____

11. Looking at the second scriptural reference, once again what can we say that God's priorities are? _____

12. What are the results in each case? _____

Let's see what Paul says.

The Scripture: Philippians 4:11

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation."

13. What secret does Paul say he has learned? _____

How does this compare with the world's obsession with owning more and more possessions, constantly worrying about money, and bankruptcy? We live in a materialistic society. Nothing is worth anything

unless it costs a lot of money. We work more and more hours each year, trying to keep up with what the advertisements tell us make for the good life. But this is what Scripture has to say about the so-called "good life."

The Scripture: I Timothy 6:9-10

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

14. What can happen to people who want to get rich? _____

15. What does Paul call the love of money? _____

16. What can it do to some people? _____

We don't have the space here to do a complete study on the Kingdom of God, but we will look at a few of the scriptures the Bible gives us. First of all, this Kingdom is not available for everyone.

The Scripture: Matthew 7:21

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My father who is in heaven."

17. Who may be able to enter the kingdom of heaven? _____

The Scripture: John 3:3

"Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'"

18. What is the first requirement for entering the Kingdom of God? _____

Yes, the Kingdom of God is available only to those who have been spiritually reborn.

Paul warns us that it is not an easy entrance.

The Scripture: Acts 14:22

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

19. How do we enter the kingdom of God? _____

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:9

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

20. Who will not inherit the kingdom of God? _____

In warning Christians to put the needs of others first, Paul has this to say about the Kingdom of God.

The Scripture: Romans 14:17

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"

21. What is the kingdom of God not? _____

22. What is it? _____

Let's look at the second qualification of God's priority list--seeking for His righteousness. Our first scripture provided us with a definition: God's way of doing and being right. Another very simple definition is a right relationship or standing with God. Christ's death already accomplished this for us. When He died for us, we were justified. God exchanged Christ's righteousness for ours. Our own righteousness will not get us anywhere. Here's what the prophet Isaiah had to say about it.

The Scripture: Isaiah 64:6

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags."

23. To what does Isaiah compare our own righteousness? _____

It is easy to see how God could not permit us in our own righteousness entrance into His kingdom. But if we already have God's righteousness, why must we seek after it? Is it because we have a tendency to take for granted what Christ has done for us? We must never allow this to happen. We must want God's righteousness with real passion.

The Scripture: Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

24. What must our attitude toward righteousness be? _____

Few of us can echo Paul's words. But if we will take seriously the priorities of the Bible, our reward shall be great.

The Scripture: Matthew 5:10

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

25. What is the reward of those who are persecuted because of righteous? _____

Entering the Kingdom of God is not easy, but God promises that we who passionately seek it will be rewarded.

The Answers

1. Not to worry about what they eat, drink, wear
2. The birds and the lilies
3. We are much more valuable than they are.
4. It doesn't accomplish anything.
5. Our heavenly Father knows what we need and will provide it.
6. God's kingdom and His righteousness
7. Those who are weary and burdened
8. Rest for their souls
9. As gentle and humble in heart
10. The Kingdom of God
11. An abundance of food, drink and clothing
12. Taking His yoke upon us and learning of Him
13. Not having to worry about the necessities of life
14. To be content in all situations
15. They can be plunged into ruin and destruction.
16. A root of all kinds of evil
17. Cause them to wander from the faith and pierce themselves with many griefs
18. Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven
19. Being born again
20. Through many hardships
21. The wicked, sexually immoral, idolaters, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers
22. A matter of eating and drinking
23. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
24. Filthy rags
25. We must hunger and thirst for it.
26. Kingdom of heaven

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