

RUSSELL SANDERS  
10-5-2021  
THE REWARD FOR ALMS

In reading through Jesus' "sermon on the mount" (Matthew chapters 5-7) some of His sayings make great sense while some others may sound a bit farfetched. Examining the true meaning of the original text can clear up much of that. The English translations often fail to convey the real meaning. It gets "lost" in translation. That being said I wish to look at the passage in Matthew 6:1-4 about "almsgiving."

Jesus said in Matthew 6:1-2, ***"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them. Otherwise ye (shall) have no reward (from) your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee (call attention to yourself) as (do) the hypocrites in the synagogues (church) and in the streets (community) (so) that they may have glory (recognition) of men (people). Verily I say unto you (that) they have their reward (in being recognized)."***

Let us first look at the word "alms." We often think of that as giving offerings (not the tithe) of money or perhaps donations of food, clothing, and goods to help the needy. Those acts do qualify, but that is not the real meaning. It has to do with the intent of the heart in such actions.

The word translated as "alms" in English is the Greek word "eleēmosunē." It means "kindness" or an "act of kindness." It proceeds from the "goodness" or "kindness" of your heart toward another person, especially one who appears to be in need. For example, if you are driving and you see a person stranded on the roadside, you stop to see if you might help them. That act of kindness is alms. Your good intention put into action is a form of almsgiving. It is the intention of your heart that matters.

Those who do "good deeds" so that people will think well of them have only that as their reward, the respect or admiration of other people. That alone is their reward. This "reward" is the Greek word "misthos" which means "hire, wage, payment, reward." It is something "earned" of men by your works. This reward doesn't come from God.

Verse 3 says, ***"But when thou doest alms (kind acts), let not your left hand know what thy right hand doeth."*** In other words, you don't go around telling others what you did. Verse 4, ***"That thine alms may be in secret (not told around), and thy Father which seeth in secret (shall) Himself reward thee openly."*** When you do kind things from a pure heart of compassion and godly love, then God Himself will reward you.

This "reward" is different. It comes from the Greek word "apodidōmi" which means to "give away" or to "give back." It goes with our saying, "You can't outgive God" because He gives back to you even more (in various ways). Would you rather have "misthos" (your wage or payment of man's recognition) or "apodidōmi" (God giving back to you)? I will choose God's favor and reward any day.