

Having a secret history with God



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If we truly want to be mature in the things of Christ, one of the most important areas of concern should be our attitude towards humility. That, along with wisdom, are in fact more important than “moving in the anointing” (whatever you might consider that to be). Many years ago, a prophetic man said to me that as the End Time gets closer it will be our inner character of maturity that will see us through, even more so than having “an anointing”. Humility in all things is a major part of that spiritual character. It forms part of the inner character of the believer and as such becomes part of what we might call “our secret history with God”.

Jesus said, “**Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing**” (Matt 6:1-4). In context He was talking about not parading yourself before the eyes of others, particularly in the giving of tithes. We can extend that principle to many other areas where we might find ourselves doing something for the Lord in public; in the sight of onlookers.

Many years ago, a visiting preacher to my congregation started his sermon by saying he had a “word from the Lord” for us. He then said something like: “When I got up this morning at my usual time of 4am for my 2-hour devotional time, I sensed the Lord say.....”

From that moment on he had lost me. Why? Because he boasted of his righteousness before others (Matt 6:1) Was it necessary for him to tell us he regular got up at 4am each day for a 2-hour prayer time? Was he trying to impress us with his spirituality? Most probably. Why not simply say “the Lord gave me a word for you”?

I’m encouraged he had the energy and devotion to get up that early and pray seeking the Lord. Nothing wrong at all about that, but why-oh-why did he spoil it by telling us! He could’ve kept it a private matter between himself and God, Who knew it anyway. No need to boast about it. In fact, part

of his “reward” that day would’ve come from the immature believers listening to him who esteemed him and probably went home trying to emulate his standard of spirituality. Other wiser members in the congregation quickly picked up that his comment was unnecessary, and somewhat unhelpful. Either way, he received his reward that day, but only from the people, not from the Lord.

If we use Jesus’ teaching about not parading yourself before others, we can say with all confidence, that the preacher got his “reward” there and then that day. In the eyes of the congregation he was perhaps admired – but in the eyes of God he “**had his reward in FULL**” (Matt 6:2). That day he received the passing accolade from people, but not the eternal one from God. Scary!

Whatever reward he might have gained from God because of his intense devotional time each day, he actually lost any reward because he boasted in it, “parading it in the eyes of men”. It sounds harsh for me to say that, but it’s what Jesus said about such an attitude: “**Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven**” (Matt 6:1).

If we boast, practice or maybe even imply we have some kind of extravagant spiritual life, then according to the words of Jesus Himself “**we have NO REWARD with our Father in heaven**”. Of course, I’m not saying we miss out on ALL the rewards that await us, but in some cases when we’ve boasted about our spirituality (whether in word or deed), then the reward for that particular occasion has been taken from us. In the eyes of others we may find some approval, but certainly not in the eyes of God.

So Jesus says to us “**When you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly.**” (Matt 6:3-4).

Jesus as a Rabbi often used proverbial expressions to contrast two different attitudes. He was simply saying that any action we do for the kingdom should be as secret as possible. The encouragement for our doing secret acts of charity for example, is that it will be pleasing to God. He will see the act, however secret it may be, and in due time will openly reward it. If the reward isn’t granted in this life, it certainly will be in the life to come.

If the words of Jesus aren’t enough, elsewhere in Scripture we’re also encouraged about having a secret history with God and being humble about what we do, and what kind of person we are.

- **Let someone else praise you, not yourself.** Prov 27:2
- **Love does not brag and is not arrogant.** 1 Cor 13:4
- **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.** Philp 2:3

Pride always wants to be noticed. An old saying from the Puritans goes like this; “Humility makes us like angels, but pride made angels to become demons”. A humble Christian is in a much better spiritual condition than any proud angel is! Having a secret history with God is one of the most profound ways to guard your heart against pride and boasting. In fact humility is a good and biblical antidote to pride and self-centredness.

Now back to the saying of Jesus in Matthew chapter 6. Culturally in the Middle East the right hand is the action hand, the doing hand, what we might call the “public” hand, the one on display to others. The left hand however is the hand “hidden away”, that hand which is “secret” and not deliberately put on display. In the Semitic culture the right hand is the hand of strength while the left one is considered to be weak (the word “left” is a variation of the Old English *lyft*, which meant “weak”, while the word “sinister” comes from the Latin for “left.”). Overall the right hand is considered to be favourable compared to the left hand, which is despised in some cultures.

But as in all things spiritual, the tables are often turned – “**the last shall be first**” and “**whoever exalts himself shall be humbled**” and “**whoever humbles himself shall be exalted**”. So when Jesus says “**don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing**” there’s a deeper meaning implied. When we’re doing something for the Kingdom with our “right hand” (meaning in the

public eye) we should do it covertly as if the “left hand” (the hidden away part of our heart) almost doesn’t know what the public right hand is doing.

Now of course when you do something publicly for the Lord your hidden heart DOES know what you’re doing in the gaze of others. However the point is that the secret inner part of our heart (represented by the hidden-away left hand) should be kept secure from any type of boasting or outward acknowledgment of what the outer part (right hand) of life is doing. The “**hidden man of the heart**” (1 Pet 3:4) needs to be guarded because it’s valuable in the sight of God. It’s almost as if the hidden person of the heart doesn’t even need to know what the outward Christian person is doing. Now of course it’s all inter-related, but I’m trying to convey an important spiritual truth here – and words often fail.

Practically speaking, if we can try to restrain our outward Christian life in such a way that it’s done quietly, reservedly and with humility, then the inward person of the heart can thrive because it’s not being tempted to go along with the bragging and pride of the outer man of the flesh. We can (and must) do good works for the Lord, but in a quiet and measured way that doesn’t attract undue attention. Done in the right manner, any outward (right hand work) will then benefit those to whom we do something, but more importantly the secret (left hand work) will benefit ourselves due to the rewards we store up. “**Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**” Matt 6:20.

Jesus clearly says not to store up treasures on earth (the passing accolades of others) but store up everlasting rewards in heaven: “**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**”. When we act with reserve (without our left hand knowing what our right hand is doing) we avoid the enticement of hypocrisy, and we lay up priceless rewards in eternity. “**Those who have been chosen of God should put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**” Col 3:12.

The secret history we have with God by not bragging, boasting (either in word or deed) is something very precious. Today’s world is so “me” centred, and we’re strictly forbidden to conform to this world (Rom 12:2). One of the greatest acts we can do is to act humbly, with Holy Spirit led reserve, keeping quiet about how many people we’ve witnessed to, how many churches we’ve preached in, how often we’ve given money to kingdom works, how many churches we’ve founded, etc. The Father knows all that, so why brag about it to others, what’s the benefit in it? If we persist in such an attitude the only reward we’ll ever receive for doing it will be the fading admiration of other people. But God will not be impressed!

He will be if you don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Do it for Him, not for your own self-aggrandisement, then when the time is right, He will reward what you’ve done in secret, and that reward and acknowledgement from Him will be in the public arena on the Day of Accountability and Rewards. “**I, YHWH search the mind, I try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.**” Jer 17:10.

“**Your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly**” (Matt 6:4).

Grace in Messiah,

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