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They Have Their Reward

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“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2).

Evidently in our Lord’s day there were individuals who, when they went to the synagogue to give of their money, did so with great show, even having a trumpeter go before them to announce their actions. They also prayed openly “standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (v. 5). Jesus called them hypocrites.

The Greek word for hypocrite was used primarily for a stage actor — one who acted as if he were another person, perhaps using a large mask to hide his true identity. In this case, the hypocrite played the part of a generous person, or a pious person, who, out of a heart of concern for the poor, or out of genuine love for God would give or pray abundantly. But under the “mask” was only a desire to have others recognize and glorify him. Perhaps they received the applause of the onlookers to which Jesus remarked, “They have their reward” (v. 5), even as the hypocrites in the synagogues and in the streets receive theirs.

The word “have,” an ordinary word, is here modified by a prefix which changes its meaning to “have in full” and was commonly used on business receipts to mean “paid in full.” No payment or service was expected to follow the close of the transaction.

How sad it is when we do “Christian” work today for the praises of men and not the glory of God. Whatever comes of our work will be here; there will be no more reward to follow. Rather, let us give, or pray, or work, in secret, as it were, “and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly” (v. 4).