

## Righteous Prayer

Jed N. Snyder Matthew 6:5-15

To teach the attitudes and content of this prayer so that my people may receive God's reward in heaven and be a spiritual help in this world.

### INTRODUCTION:

The adversary the devil is a liar and a deceiver. Perhaps one of the greatest of his tricks is in the matter of prayer. The adversary is satisfied with prayer that sort of soothes the soul of the human and lulls him into spiritual lethargy by getting him to believe that he is o.k. because of his prayers. The adversary loves prayers that are meaningless, selfish and worthless. He doesn't mind if people pray. It is righteous praying that he fears.

In this message we want to look at prayer that is righteous, prayer that actually gets something accomplished. We will follow the method of our Lord here and speak of the negative and then of the effective.

### I. PRAYING WITH HUMAN, EARTHLY REWARDS Matthew 6: 5, 7 (Hypocritical)

#### A. Ostentatious (seen by man) Matthew 6: 5

Any prayer that is made in such a manner for the purpose of being seen by man is what Jesus refers to in this passage.

#### B. Meaningless (babbling) Matthew 6: 5

1. Rote prayer – illustrations that seem frequently to fit into what Jesus spoke about - Roman Catholic rosary, Jewish 'shema', Protestant recitations of 'The Lord's Prayer', 'Now I lay me down to sleep', etc.

2. Mechanical prayer -- 'Prayer wheels' of some religions, 'meditation' -- which is not really meditation (conscious consideration of a matter) but is rather a deliberate emptying of the mind-- and other similar forms of prayer are mechanical and mostly meaningless. Any kind of praying which does not engage the mind is babbling.

#### C. Verbose (many words) Matthew 6: 7

What sort of God would it be that is interested in the mechanics and statistics of prayer? (Methods and word counts mean nothing to God).

Any praying of this sort already has any reward that it might receive. The reward is by other men in this world.

### II. PRAYING WITH GODLY, HEAVENLY REWARDS Matthew 6: 5-15

The 'Lord's Prayer' was given as a model prayer and also can be used as a prayer itself, if we do so with sincere meaning. Jesus approaches the telling of his disciples about this prayer by first dealing with the manner of prayer and the motivation for praying.

#### A. Manner -- secret prayer Matthew 6: 6

The issue here is not total secrecy, of course, but rather the principle of not making a display of praying. The fact that we are praying is between us and God. It is not for appearance.

#### B. Motivation -- character of the Listener Matthew 6:7-8

"The essential difference between pharisaic, pagan and Christian praying lies in the kind of God we pray to. Other gods may like mechanical incantations; but not the living and true God revealed by Jesus Christ. Jesus told us to address him as (literally) 'our Father in the heavens'. This implies first that he is personal, as much 'he' as I am 'I'...One of the reasons for rejecting the attempts of modern radical theologians to reconstruct the doctrine of God is that they depersonalize him. The concept of God as 'the ground of our (human) being' is simply not compatible with the notion of his divine fatherhood. God is just as personal as we are, in fact more so. **Secondly**, he is loving. He is not an ogre who terrifies us with hideous cruelty, nor the kind of father we sometimes read or hear about -autocrat, playboy, drunkard- but he himself fulfills the ideal of fatherhood in his loving care for his children. **Thirdly**, he is powerful. He is not only good but great. The words 'in the heavens' denote not the place of his abode so much as the authority and power at his command as the creator, and ruler of all things. Thus he combines fatherly love with heavenly power, and what his love directs his power is able to perform." John R. W. Stott, The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, p. 145-146

Jesus specifically shows God as a...

1. Seeing God Matthew 6: 6 - sees what is done in secret
2. Knowing God Matthew 6: 8 - your Father knows what you need
3. Doing God Matthew 6: 6 - will reward you

C. Message -- content of the prayer Matthew 6: 9-15

1. Reverent -- Father in heaven - Some may have difficulty relating to a good and kindly father, due to difficulties in relationships in this world. For you I pray that you may learn to accept His love and his blessing in spite of the weaknesses in your own past. He is the best and highest that a father can be.

Hallowed be your name -- We pray that we may treat His name in a holy manner, because it is holy and it represents him in all his perfection and majesty.

2. Respectful -- This is closely related to his name and relates to his rule in this world. We know that God is sovereign in all, but that sovereignty is not recognized by many. Thus this part of the prayer is for more to voluntarily submit themselves to the rule of God. God will be God regardless of man's submission now, but man's situation will be much more satisfying if man bows to God willingly.

Your kingdom come -- this relates to the expression of God's kingdom in this world. He is ruling, but many have not joined his kingdom spiritually yet and many others are disloyal subjects in that they violate the desires of the King. Your will be done -- there are certain obvious ways in which God's will shall be accomplished, but it is not God's will (desire) that any should perish. There is some real tension in this aspect of the prayer between man's will and God's will. Man can choose within certain limits that God has established.

Respect for God's purposes in this world is a vital aspect to be considered if we want to know whether our prayers are to be rewarded by God or are only a practice in this world.

3. Receptive -- Prayer is the ultimate act of dependence if we are truly understanding of our own inability to do anything good of ourselves.

Give us this day our daily bread - this prayer probably can be considered to include all the necessities of life; food, shelter, clothing. It does not include our wants. God often goes the extra distance and gives many things we want but he is not obliged by this model prayer to do so. This does not imply that we should not work to obtain our daily food (the necessities of life).

Rather, it implies the ability to work to get that which is needed for life.

4. Realistic -- we cannot expect God to help us in spiritual matters if we refuse to be of assistance to others.

Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us - the request is for spiritual well being. Remember that what God has forgiven each of us who know him, is far greater than anything we can forgive of one another. Remember Jesus' story of the master who forgave the huge debt of his servant only to have that same servant refuse to forgive the paltry little debt of his fellow servant.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one - this has to do not so much with the total absence of temptation (we would have to leave the world) but with the desire that we not be overcome by the evil one, i.e. satan who is so much greater than we in power, but who can never overcome us as we rest in Christ. This refers, then to moral deliverance.

CONCLUSION: The error of the hypocrite is selfishness. Even in his praying he is obsessed with himself, how much, how profound, how sacrificial, how beautiful his prayers are.

The error of the pagan or heathen is mindless praying, rote or meaningless repetition or mechanics or liturgy.

The truly Christian prayer is God-centered, and intelligent. It is seeking the glory and honor of God and his reputation in this world.