

AND WHEN YOU PRAY

Text: Matthew 6:5-15

INTRO: Jesus cautioned His disciples not to pray like the hypocrites & heathens. We want to examine the Lord's words & take note of what the Lord was forbidding His disciples—and what He was not forbidding them to do.

I. THEY LOVE TO PRAY STANDING... vs. 5.

A. God has not specified any particular posture to be assumed when praying to the exclusion of other positions. Acceptable prayers have been prayed when the worshipper was:

1. Kneeling, Acts 9:40.
2. Lying prostrate on the ground: Matt 26:39
3. Standing. Mark 11:25, And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.
4. Lifting up eyes to heaven. JN 17:1, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven & said, "Father, the hour has come: glorify Your Son that Your Son also may glorify You."
5. Lifting up holy hands. 1 Tim 2:8, I desire that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath & doubting.
6. Hanging on a cross. Luke 23:34, 46
7. Sitting down. Luke 22:14-20.

B. The hypocrites were not condemned for standing to pray, but for their motive in doing so.

II. GO INTO YOUR ROOM [CLOSET, KJV], vs. 6.

A. In this statement, we must not conclude that God has forbidden public prayer. Public prayer, properly offered, is acceptable to God.

1 Cor 14:16, Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

John 11:41-42, 45, Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."... Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

- B. Of course, private prayer does not necessarily need to be audible for God to hear it.

1 Sam 1:11-13, Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant & remember me, & not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, & no razor shall come upon his head." And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

- C. Again, the thing wrong with the prayers of the hypocrites was not that it was public but that it was insincere, produced from a heart of deceit, & its motive was to impress the public who heard it.

III. USE NOT VAIN REPETITIONS... vs. 7.

- A. Here, the Lord did not forbid repeating certain words, for in other passages He authorized such.

Matt. 7:7-8

Matt 26:44, & He left them, went away again, & prayed the 3rd time, saying the same words.

- B. What the Lord did forbid was the repeating of vain, empty phrases such as the heathens exemplified in other passages of Scripture.

Acts 19:34, But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about 2 hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

IV. THE PRIMARY LESSON OF THE LORD IN THIS TEXT IS WITH REGARD TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORSHIPPER. He must possess:

- A. A forgiving spirit, vs. 12, 14-15.
- B. An humble attitude before God & man.
 - 1. This does not require any certain posture, but if one particular posture helps to humble you, use it.
 - 2. The Lord has not legislated that in prayer we should use the language of 1611 with its "these & thous," but if this seems more humble or respectful to use, use it.
- C. Public prayer should be as sincere as private prayer. The petition that does not portray the real thoughts of the heart may deceive men, but God knows the true thoughts behind it.

Luke 18:10-14, Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood & prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Rom 8:26-27 (KJV), Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

THE PRAYER OF CYRUS BROWN (by Sam W. Foss).

“The proper way for a man to pray,” said deacon Lemuel Keys,
“And the only proper attitude is down upon his knees.”

“No, I should say the way to pray,” said preacher Doctor Wise,
“Is standing straight, with outstretched arms & rapt & turned up
eyes.”

“Oh, no, no, no,” said elder Snow, “Such posture is too proud.
A man should pray with eyes fast closed & head contritely
bowed.”

“It seems to me his hands should be austerely clasped in front
With both tuumbs pointing toward the ground” said preacher
Doctor Blunt.

“Last year I fell in Hodkins well headfirst” said Cyrus Brown,
“With both my heels a sticking up, my head a-pointing down.
And I made a prayer right then & there, best prayer I ever said.
The prayingest prayer I ever prayed I was standing on my head.”

Butler St., Springhill, La, February 9, 1975
Oakwood, TX, June 25, 1975
La Porte, TX, December 21, 1975
La Porte, TX, March 16, 1980
Bible Camp, Sabinal, TX, June 19, 1980
Exton, PA, August 5, 1984
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, May 17, 1992
Wrightsville, PA, June 1, 1997
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, April 3, 2005