

"The Danger of Hypocrisy"

Part 4

Matthew 6:1-15

Introduction: Several weeks back we had entered into Matthew chapter 6 in our study of the Sermon on the Mount. In this 6th chapter we have been looking at the danger of hypocrisy in the life of the believer. In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus mentions 3 practices of the Christian life where hypocrisy can enter in.

The first practice He mentions is the practice of giving. The second practice is prayer. If we give to receive the praise of men then we have no eternal reward. If we pray to be heard by men then God will not hear our prayers. The third practice which we have not studied yet is fasting. Now Jesus addresses each one of these practices here in these verses but there is something deeper here that we must see. He focuses more upon prayer than He does giving or fasting. In the section on giving He tells His disciples what to avoid and touches briefly about how to give discretely.

Notice Matthew 6:1-4

When He addresses the practice of fasting He does the same.

Notice Matthew 6:16-18

But when He addresses the subject of prayer He not only tells them what to avoid but He also takes the time to instruct them as to how they were to pray.

Notice Matthew 6:9-15

For several weeks we will take the time to look closely at Matthew 6:9-15. This is one of the most misunderstood passages found in the Bible. Many people believe that this is a prayer that Jesus gave for us to recite and they label it as the "Lord's Prayer".

I. Learning to Pray

This is not a prayer given to us to recite over and over again. This is an outline for prayer that Jesus has given to us. His intent was that we would take this outline and we would attach to this skeleton spiritual meat and develop our prayers around this outline. Let me give to you some thoughts that will back this up. First of all in Luke 11 Jesus spoke almost the very same Words. This is not the same scene as Matthew 6 but the thought is the same.

Luke 11:1-4

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

² And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

³ Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

I want to use Luke 11 and Matthew 6 to show you that this is not a prayer that was given to believers to recite over and over again. But instead it is an outline.

1. The "prayer" in Matthew 6 is not exactly the same as the "prayer" in Luke 11. If Jesus was going to give to us a prayer to recite He would have surely made them both the same.
2. In Matthew 6:7 Jesus had just told his disciples not to use vain repetition as the heathen do. It would therefore be a contradiction of Scripture if He then went on and gave us a prayer to recite over and over again.
3. In Luke 11:1 Jesus disciples said, "Teach us to pray", they did not say, "Teach us a prayer".
4. There is no place in the Bible where we can find this "prayer" recited or repeated. It is not in the Gospels, Acts, or the Epistles. If it were a "prayer" to be recited then sure it would have been recorded and recited elsewhere in the Bible.

There are 4 reasons I believe this is not a prayer but it is an outline for us to build our prayers around.

A. Jewish History

Now I want to give to you some history of Jewish prayer. Long before the religious leaders poisoned the minds of many with their teaching on prayer the truly righteous Jewish people of the Old Testament had the proper idea and perspective about prayer.

1. **They believed with all of their heart that God desired for them to come to Him in prayer. They did not come to God in fear but they came with open hearts believing that God desired for them to open their hearts to Him.**

Psalm 91:14-15

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14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

Psalm 145:18-19

18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

They not only believed that God desired to hear their prayers but they also believed God heard their prayers.

Psalm 65:2

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

2. Those who were righteous Jews also believed that prayer was to be a constant part their lives. It was not something that was only to be done when there was a problem but it was to be something that was practiced daily in the believer's life.

Daniel 6:10

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel and many of the others of the Old Testament believed that prayer was to be ongoing communion with God. Prayer was not

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something that you did only when your world was turned upside down. They were correct with this teaching. Prayer is to be a constant part of our lives and it is to be unbroken communion with God.

3. They believed pray should be a time to praise God.

Psalm 34:1

I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalm 51:15

¹⁵ O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

4. They believed pray should be a time to thank God for His blessings.

Psalm 95:2

² Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

Psalm 100:4

⁴ Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

Psalm 116:17

¹⁷ I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

5. They also believed all who came to God in prayer should come with a sense of reverence for Him.

Isaiah 6:1-5

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah had a deep respect and reverence for God. He did not enter into the presence of God in a very careless manner. Isaiah was aware of his sinful condition and the Holiness of God and therefore Isaiah came with great reverence for God.

6. The righteous Jews also believed that when they came to God they should be walking in obedience to His Word.

Psalm 119:1-7

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

² Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

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³ *They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*

⁴ *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

⁵ *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

⁶ **Then shall I not be ashamed**, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

⁷ **I will praise thee with uprightness of heart**,

7. They also believed that confession of sin was need before they could commune with God.

Psalm 26:6

⁶ *I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar,
O LORD:*

The Jews believed that when a man was walking in fellowship his prayers could move the heart of God.

James 5:16b

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

8. They were not selfish in their prayers.

When they prayed they did not just focus upon themselves but they were focused upon the entire nation of Israel. There is a prayer that was very interesting that was offered by the rabbis that shows their concern for the nation. Here was the prayer:

"Hear not O Lord the prayer of the traveler". This sounds strange but let me give you the background for it. When a man was travelling he did not have the means of travel as we do so because he was in the

weather as he travelled he would pray for good weather. He did not desire to see wind and rain. So when the prayer was offered to God to not hear the prayer of the traveler it was offered out of concern for all others. You see the traveler was only one man but there may be many others whose crops really need water so they would pray this pray out of concern for the greatest need in their land.

9. They believed God's will was superior to theirs.

The Jewish man that was walking in fellowship with the Lord would not pray for his own will to be done but instead he would pray for God's will to be done.

Psalm 40:7-8

*Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,
I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

10. They also believed in being persistent in their prayers.

Deuteronomy 9:15-18

¹⁵ So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.

¹⁶ And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.

¹⁷ And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

¹⁸ And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all

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your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Moses prayed for the people of Israel for 40 days and nights.

Conclusion:

Somewhere along the way Israel lost these positive principles of prayer. As we come to Matthew 6 we can see that prayer among the leaders had become ritualistic and a means to make them look righteous before men. Their prayers were empty and meaningless.

In Matthew 6:9-15 Jesus did not teach anything new. He was just taking them back to what the Old Testament Saints had practiced in their lives.

What about your prayers?

Prayer is not me trying to convince God to accept my will. Prayer is conforming myself to His will.

Is prayer:

1. A constant part of your life?
2. A time to praise God?
3. A time to thank God?
4. Offered with reverence for God?
5. Offered in obedience?
6. Offered out of a pure heart?
7. Offered only for you?
8. All about God's will?
9. Something you are persistent at?