

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

41- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 21
Secret Purity and Public Hypocrisy- Part 4

Church February 19, 2023

Matthew 6:1-24

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

3 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

11 'Give us this day our daily bread.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face

18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

*To the Glory of God the Holy Father; God the Holy Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now as we examine what Jesus is teaching here in what we call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*”- we see that Jesus is addressing four Topics:

1. Giving to the Poor (verses 2-4)
2. Praying (verses 5-15)
3. Fasting (verses 16-18)
4. Wealth (verses 19-24)

And last time, we began looking at what Jesus taught about Prayer. And as we continue to day to look at what Jesus taught about Prayer- we must understand that it is just as important to see what Jesus did NOT discuss concerning this Gift of Prayer as what He DID discuss. For example:

1. There is no particular *Physical Posture* for Prayer

It is interesting when studying what the Bible actually teaches about Prayer- that we find that Jesus never got into anything about the “*Physical Posture*” when people were praying. And that is odd because many people today teach that we are supposed to take a certain Posture or Position when we are praying. You hear this all the time and see it with the various kinds of Man-made religions. Even the Jews believe there's a certain Posture in Prayer. For example- if you go to the “*Wailing Wall*” in Jerusalem today you would see them take that special Posture as they genuflect in a certain way. You might also see them on other occasions in other Postures which they think are critical to one degree or another for God to hear and answer their Prayers.

Other false religions teach that in order for God to hear you- you have to be prostrate on the ground and put your lips on the earth and that God is more likely to hear your Prayer in that Posture than any other.

Now I agree that kneeling down or even laying down on the ground is good for our own Humility. So, we are free to “*go low*” in our Prayers during certain times and for certain reasons- *especially* when there is terrible Agony going on in our lives; or we are confessing great Sin. The Apostle Paul wrote this in **Ephesians 3:14**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

... and his “Reason” behind his “bowing his knees” was the great Burden Paul had that Jesus Christ would “dwell in the hearts” of God’s people, “by Faith”. And we also read this in **Daniel 6:10**:

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

... and Daniel’s Purpose behind his “bowing” was because the Government had made praying to God illegal. And so, he felt led to make sure that the Government knew he wasn’t going to obey their ungodly and sinful Law. So, we see that there is “biblical Precedent” to humble yourself before God when you pray.

But when you study History- you will find that the single most *common* way that the ancient Jews prayed- was to stand upright with their eyes open and their hands raised. Yet some people who prayed in the Bible prayed with their hands down; while others prayed sitting. Some people prayed looking down- refusing to look up; while still others prayed looking up- refusing to look down.

The Bible gives us illustrations of people who prayed bowing low; people who prayed on their face; people who prayed with their face between their knees; people who prayed facing the Temple in Jerusalem; people who prayed smiting their breast; and on and on.

So, in the Bible- there is no “correct” Posture of Prayer. And, if you're going to try to obey **1 Timothy 5:17** and “**Pray without ceasing**”- common sense would dictate that Posture can't be a primary Issue.

So, what we must know is that God the Spirit will lead people about whether they should kneel; or bow low; or look up; or look down; or close their eyes; or raise their hands- when they pray. Different Situations dictate different Responses from God's people. So, we should be content to leave those things between the individual believer and God.

2. There is no particular *Place* to Pray

Also notice that Jesus didn't say anything about a particular Place where we had to “go” or “be in”- in order to pray. For example, Jesus didn't *limit* Prayer to the Temple; or the Courtyard; or even the Synagogue. So, you don't have to wait until you get to Church to pray- you can even pray at home or in your car on the way to Church! For example, in **The Acts 10:9b**- the infallible Word of the living God says:

... Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

Now it is true that in **Matthew 6:5**- Jesus was *condemning* the hypocritical praying of the religious frauds in public places to be “seen by men”. And so, IN RESPONSE TO THEIR HYPOCRISY- He said this in **Matthew 6:6**:

... go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret

... yet even at that- Jesus never *limited* our Prayers to the “**inner room**” of our homes.

In fact, if you look at the Scripture you will find people praying *everywhere*. Some of them were praying while they were fighting in a battle or in a cave. God's people prayed in a closet and in a garden, as our Lord Himself did along with His disciples. Sometimes they prayed on a mountain and in a valley. Sometimes they prayed by the sea or by a river. Sometimes they prayed in the streets and sometimes they prayed in bed. Sometimes they prayed at home and sometimes on the top of their homes and sometimes in a prison. One man prayed in a “great fish”. Sometimes they prayed in solitude and at other times- they prayed

with a group. Sometimes they prayed in the wilderness and sometimes in the city. Jesus prayed on a cross and so did a thief.

This is one of the wonderful things about Prayer. There's absolutely no limit to where you can pray. So, because of the finished Work of our Lord Jesus- we may pray everywhere; at all times; and in any Posture- and be assured that God will hear us.

3. There is no particular *Time* to Pray

And notice that Jesus also didn't say anything about WHEN we are to pray. In the Bible you will find people praying early in the morning- way before dawn. But you will also find some who prayed much later in the morning *after* the sun has already risen. You will find people praying three times a day; and others who prayed in the evening.

There were people who prayed *before* their meal; and others who prayed *after* their meal like in **Deuteronomy 8**. You will find people praying at three o'clock in the afternoon; and at bedtime; at midnight; all day; and even all night.

Now it is true that every man that God used in the Bible got up early in the morning to pray. And that's not my opinion- it's simply a fact of the Bible. And that Habit was so noticed that it reached out past the Bible and into the lives of the Puritans- who also took on that Way of Prayer. And that Manner was also the preferred Way that the men whom God used to begin this nation- both politically and business wise- they all got up early and prayed; and read the Bible; before they started their day.

But the Point here is that getting up early to pray is NOT a Requirement for God to hear you. We should thank God that He hears His people when they pray- NOT simply because they pray at a certain Time.

So, in the Bible- there are no limits in Prayer about any particular Posture; or any particular Place; or any particular Time. And I think that this even spills over into a proper Attitude for Prayer as well.

4. There is no particular *Attitude* in Prayer

Now I want to say something here. I absolutely believe that the Christian Life is a Life of great Joy. In fact, I do not believe that lost people can even fathom the Joy that believers have. I do not think it is possible for a lost person to know the great Joy of having his Sins forgiven and making Peace with God. So, *whatever* Joy that an *unsaved* person has- it pales in comparison to that of a true Believer.

But that doesn't mean that you experience this great Joy at every moment of your walk with God. There are times that God has willed that His children taste of great Sorrow; and unbelievable Disappointments; and terrible Sadness; and deep Hurt and Pain. It is sometimes God's Will that His own people are persecuted; and that we have our physical bodies beaten and abused; and that our material Possessions are confiscated.

And during those times- we are to *continue* in our Prayers; and we are to *continue* to obey Christ; and *continue* to love and follow Jesus- even though many in and out of the Church will tell you that you are somehow *exempt* from loving and obeying Christ during those times. But that isn't true. We are told to love and serve God *in* our Sadness; and *in* our Pain; and *in* our Troubles; and *in* our Grieving; and *in* our Disappointments; and *in* our Sicknesses; and *in* our Discouragements; and in our Persecutions. And that Reality will spill over into our Prayer Life.

So, as we study God's Word- we find genuine Believers, who prayed when they were very sad. They came before God when they were in terrible Sadness and unspeakable Grief. And in the Bible, there are Prayers of great heartfelt Repentance and Grief over Sin. For example, in the **Book of Job**- we find that sometimes people, who just experienced very traumatic Episodes, prayed- wearing sackcloth; sitting in ashes; putting ashes on their foreheads; shaving their heads; smiting their chest; while they wept bitterly; throwing dust on their head while they ripped their clothes.

People prayed as they were fasting; and sighing; and groaning; and even crying out loud- agonizing over something. People prayed with a broken heart and a broken spirit- sometimes making Oaths and sometimes offering Sacrifices. So, there are people who prayed- as they had every conceivable Attitude that a human heart could have.

But on the other hand- we find how many Prayers were made at the height of great Joy and in wonderful Celebration. And they came before God- singing their Prayers out of this abounding Joy!

And that tells us that, like the other three Aspects- there are no scriptural Limits to the Attitude of the one who prays. You might come before God in Prayer in an Attitude of complete Brokenness and Repentance- or you might come in an Attitude of Celebration and Joy- and everything in between. And so, from that we can say that every type of Attitude is acceptable to God- when we pray.

So, there are really no Boundaries or Limits in terms of our Prayers. We may pray in all kinds of Postures. We can pray in all kinds of Places. We can pray at all Times; and we can pray in all sorts of Attitudes; and in all kinds of Circumstances and Situations. So, those things that the false religions of the world pay so much

attention to- are NEVER the Issue with God. There are ONLY four Issues with God about Prayer:

1. We MUST pray (in Faith-believing)
2. We MUST be *genuine* in our Prayers (not Hypocritical)
3. We MUST pray about the Issues that matter to God (God's Will)
4. We MUST pray so that God alone is glorified

.. and we are to pray- without ceasing; at all times; in all places; in every kind of Attitude- in every Situation we find ourselves in.

And that means that this marvelous Gift of Prayer is actually an “all-inclusive” Way of Life. Prayer should be as normal and natural and automatic to us as Breathing. We don't breathe just one time in the morning; and then once again at night; and then go to sleep. No, we breathe all the time- all during the day- everywhere we go; and as we are in every kind of Situation. And that's *exactly* how we should pray.

And it is also NOT about praying out loud versus praying quietly. God hears the unspoken Prayers as much and as easily as He does those Prayers shouted with great Volume. Now some people verbalize Prayers more than others- but that is nothing more than their own personal Choice. The Bible doesn't prescribe quiet or silent Prayers. The Bible merely tells us to pray. So, we need to cry out to God with the kind of Heart that rises up; and offers its Longings; and Desires; as well as even its Disappointments to God.

But what Jesus DID tell us to do here in this Sermon concerning Prayer was WHAT SUBJECTS to pray about. So, let's read verses 5-15 again together:

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

11 'Give us this day our daily bread.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Now we have already gone over how NOT to pray in verses 5-8- so I want to concentrate on verses 9-13 today. And the *first* thing Jesus said in verse 9 was,

Pray, then, in this way...

Now as I have mentioned many times before- this phrase by Jesus does NOT mean to simply memorize and repeat these words in Church. And I'm not saying this because this is some hobby-horse I want to ride. It is a fundamental Misunderstanding of what Jesus was teaching here for people to memorize what has come to be called, the "*Lord's Prayer*" and then repeat it in Church or elsewhere and think they are doing what Jesus said to do.

What Jesus taught in verses 9-13 are the SUBJECTS or the ISSUES that matter the MOST to God. And so, these things ought to matter the MOST to us as well. And Jesus teaches them here- NOT so that we would merely repeat them- but so that these Subjects would *dominate* our Prayer Life. And so, *whatever else* we pray about (and there ARE other things to pray about)- those other things should NEVER eclipse the SUBJECTS that Jesus teaches here. So, what are the Subjects that Jesus teaches here?

- We are to pray about God being the Believer's heavenly Father
- We are to pray that God's Name is to be Hallowed in all we think and do and want and pray about
- We are to pray about God's Kingdom coming to this earth in fullness
- We are to pray that God's Will is done on the earth to the same extent and with the same urgency that God's Will is done in Heaven
- We are to pray about God supplying that which we need for that day
- We are to pray about the Connection of God forgiving our Sins with the Ability that we have to forgive those who have sinned against us
- We are to pray that God will NOT lead us into Temptation
- We are to pray that God will deliver from the Evil one and what the Evil one has to offer us

- We are to pray that God will make us aware that we ask all of this precisely because we know and understand that the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory belongs ONLY to God alone

These are the Issues and the Subjects that God is MOST interested in. But what is both amazing and frightening- is that the overwhelming majority of the Prayers of the average Church-goer today- not only are NOT about these Subjects- but many of the Prayers offered today are in direct contradiction *against* the Issues that Jesus told us to pray about. And that is a direct Result of thinking that Jesus wanted us to memorize these words and then repeat them in Church instead of actually paying about them.

For example, rather than merely repeating the words, “**Our Father who is in heaven**”- Jesus wants us to actually pray about how it came to be that Almighty God is our Father. Jesus wants us to pray about what all had to be done; and undone; in both Heaven and on earth; for God to take wicked Gentiles and become their heavenly Father. And in our praying about this amazing Mystery- we then should be led to read and study the Scriptures and then to ask Questions about how it is that people who are NOT Jews; are now in the Family of God- and *what* that should mean to us; and *how* we are to live our lives; and *how* we should think; and act; and *how* all that relates to Who God is; and What God alone has done- in, by, and through all three Persons of the Trinity!

And this brings up a very important Part of this entire Gift called, “Prayer”. It is perfectly appropriate that we would take one single Portion- or one Subject of the Prayer that Jesus taught us to pray about- and spend the entire day; or the whole week; or a month; or even a year- praying; and thinking; and pondering; and meditating and asking Questions about this one single Issue- to the point where we begin to see and understand just how thrilling and amazing this one part of this “Guideline about Prayer” really is. And that is how praying about these Issues would begin to change our Lives.

We need to remember, dear friends, that the Goal in Prayer is the SAME Goal in Bible Study. The Goal is NOT to finish- so we can then move on to something else. The Goal of Prayer as well as the Goal in studying God’s Word- is to understand; to realize; to know; to comprehend WHAT God has said (Bible Study) and WHAT the Will of God is (Prayer)- and then to so value that Divine Truth or that Will of God- that we then apply it to our own personal Lives!

Why in the world should we move on to something else (that we don’t have a clue about) before we understand what we are studying or praying about now? And that means that Believers are NEVER to just “*say our Prayers*”. Prayers are NEVER to be merely “*said*”. Prayers are to be *prayed*. And I’m not being

semantic here. “*Saying our Prayers*” is a Roman religious Concept (that they just made up)- where we memorize certain Prayers to say under certain Circumstances.

But nobody in the Bible just “said” their Prayers. For example, these modern “religious frauds” teach that we have one certain Prayer that we have memorized and then we “say” or “repeat” every morning. And then there is another certain Prayer that we have memorized (or even read) and then we “say” or repeat that Prayer at noon. And there is another Prayer that we repeat over and over when we eat our food; and another Prayer we “say” at night before we go to bed. And this is very common. But praying like that is *exactly* what Jesus told us NOT to do when He said,

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

... and the word, “**Gentiles**” here refers to unsaved; untaught; pagan Barbarians.

My Brothers and Sisters, each Prayer that we pray should be “fresh”; and “real”; and “earnest”; and “sincere”; and a *genuine* “Communication” with God. And our Prayers are to be a desperate. We are to ask God about the Issues that matter to both us and God- as though we *honestly* think if God doesn’t move- there will be a serious Problem. A great Example of this kind of desperate and earnest and genuine Prayer is when Peter cried out,

Lord, save me! (Matthew 14:30)

... when he was walking on the water with Jesus and began to sink into the raging sea!

Peter had no time for any religious pretense; no time for any hypocrisy; no opportunity to try to be eloquent or poetic. Peter was really sinking into the sea; and he knew he would drown if Jesus did not rescue him. So, there was a sense of Desperation and Earnestness in his Prayer. And Peter’s Prayer wasn’t rehearsed or memorized. He really NEEDED Jesus to help him- or he would perish! Look what the first Pastor of the Church at Jerusalem taught about this from **James 5:16b**:

... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

... where the word, “**effective**” comes from a Greek word (*energeoo*; Strong’s # 1754), which means: *to put forth into Power*. So, this is to be understood as the *inward* Working of God the Holy Spirit in taking the Supplications (Prayers) of

godly people and brining those Prayers into alignment with the Will of God- which will cause those Prayers to be answered- *powerfully*.

And then the half- brother of Jesus gave us an example of what he was talking about when he said we are to pray like that in **James 5:17&18:**

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Now when James says here that the great Prophet Elijah was, “**a man with a nature like ours**”- he was reminding us that, as great as this man was, and as much as God used him- Elijah was just a human being- born of woman- a wicked sinner- who did all that he did- solely by the Grace of God. And James said that Elijah “prayed earnestly”- **that it would not rain**. And what was the Result of this earnest Prayer?

... it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

Now keep in mind that the Reason God answered Elijah’s Prayer was because it was in alignment with God’s revealed Will. So, a person can be as earnest and as serious and as genuine as possible- but if he is asking contrary to God’s Will- God will NEVER answer that Prayer.

So, even though we are told to pray effectively and earnestly and fervently- it is NOT merely the Earnestness of our Prayer that *causes* God to move. We do NOT have the Power or the Right to try to get God to do something that He has already said was NOT His Will. So, we should NOT look at Prayer as a “Tool” to twist God’s Arm behind His Back to *force* Him to do what *we* want Him to do. God simply won’t be handled like that- and for anyone to even *try* to do that- is Sin.

My dear friends, we MUST first seek out God’s Will *before* we pray. And then we should pray *fervently* in accord with that. So, if the Bible gives the Answer- then we are to pray sincerely in accord with Scripture. But if the Bible is silent about that particular Issue- then we MUST always pray earnestly with a very important caveat like this: “*If it be Your Will, Lord*”. So, we must be humble enough to know that what *we desperately* want may NOT be God’s Will.

But the inspired and infallible Example that James gave us here proves that the “Pattern of Prayer” that I have taught you held true:

- God desires to do certain things in the earth

- God has chosen to do those things- ONLY in *response* to answering the Prayers of His people
- So, we are to pray that God will do- that which He has already said He wants to do
- And if His people do NOT pray- God will NOT move- even though it is His Will to do those things
- But because it IS God's Will to do those things- God will *assure* that His people pray to that end

Now I have told you that God didn't *have* to set things up like this- but the Bible teaches that He did. And this Way with Prayer is *irrevocable*. God will NOT move any other way- until Jesus comes back. So, the *first* thing that had to happen- is that, in some way- God made His Will known to Elijah about the Drought. And then Elijah had to *agree* with that Will; and he had to *want* that Will of God to come to pass MORE than Elijah wanted his Nation to remain prosperous and healthy. And when Elijah finally came to the place where he genuinely LOVED God's Will MORE than his own- he prayed in accord with God's Will- even though he knew that a 3-1/2 year Drought would literally destroy the nation he loved and kill many people.

And when Elijah prayed in accord with God's Will- he *sincerely* prayed- even though he already knew that it was God's Will. And God then answered him; and did what He already wanted to do anyway! And then after the 3-1/2 year Drought- God made His Will known again to the Prophet; and he earnestly prayed again- and God sent the rain!

So, both things are true about Prayer:

1. We MUST pray in accord with God's Will
2. We MUST pray *earnestly* and *fervently*

... even though we already know it is God's Will to do this thing.

And that means that, *ultimately*- the *Gift of Prayer* is the "*Means of Grace*" that God has chosen to help us, *first*, discover What God's Will is; and then, secondly God must change our hearts so that we agree with and love God's Will MORE than we love our *own* will. And then, *finally*, we are to ask- *fervently*- for God's Will to be done in the earth the same Way that God's Will is carried out in Heaven.

Now I would suggest to you that most people in the modern Church have never even thought about Prayer in this Way- much less actually done it. And THAT is *why* Jesus told us to pray,

Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven

... because *before* we can see God answer our Prayers the Way He answered Elijah's Prayers (even though he had a nature like ours) - we MUST first understand and agree that God's Will is *better* and more important- than our own will. And that is a HUGE first step.

So, just HOW is God's Will "**done**" in Heaven? God speaks and His Word is *instantly* obeyed with NO Rebellion; or Hesitation; or Reluctance at all! NONE! And back when there WAS Rebellion against God's Will in Heaven with Lucifer and a third of all the Angels- God IMMEDIATELY solved that Problem by casting them out of Heaven- like Lightning (**Luke 10:18**)- and by NEVER allowing them access to Heaven again (**The Revelation 12:8**)!

But as great as that is- it is still NOT enough- because God's Will should ALWAYS be "**done**" with great Joy! I mean what could *possibly* be *better* than God's Will? So, in Heaven- there is ALWAYS great Joy to do God's Will.

But that is NOT how God's Will is "**done**" on the earth for the most part. What is normal and natural down here- is that people rebel against God's Will every day- all day long. Sadly, even Believers do that. And most people have never even considered "doing" God's Will with Joy. Doing God's Will is almost universally depicted as something hard; and a great sacrifice; and something that almost always hurts us. And that is WHY Jesus told us to pray that God's Will is "**done**" in us; and in our Families; and in our Church; and in our Nation- to the SAME extent; and with the SAME urgency; and with the SAME Joy- that God's Will is "done" in Heaven. So, how long should we pray like this? Until we can truthfully say with David,

I delight to do Your will, O my God... (Psalm 40:8a)

So, we should NEVER look at Prayer as some type of "Labor"- even though we are told to "persevere in it". We should always see the Gift of Prayer as a Privilege; an Honor and a Joy that the Owner and Creator of the Universe would even care what we want or need.

But again, this is foreign to most. More often than not- the Importance of our Prayers is usually determined by how much we *want* something- with little or no thought as to what God's Will might be. And what *motivates* us to pray- earnestly- is usually how much we *really* want that thing- rather than so that God's Will is done; and God alone is glorified. And our Joy in our Prayers is usually determined by us imagining how great it will be to actually *get* what we're asking for- rather than seeing God alone glorified and His Will being done.

And again, I honestly believe that this is true because we have been taught that we are to simply memorize these words and phrases and then repeat them in Church- rather than actually crying out to God for Him to so radically change us- that we would find the fullness of Joy in God's Will being done in the earth- to the same extent that God's Will is done in Heaven!

So, is it a Sin for people to repeat this Prayer in Church? Not as long as they are actually praying in accord with these subjects. But if we are repeating these words in Church and then thinking that because we feel "religious" by doing that- we are obeying Jesus- I am completely against it.

But my friends, I am sorely afraid that we Americans are constantly trying to find an *easier* and *simpler* and *faster* way to do things- even Prayer- because we are all so very busy. And one thing about genuine Prayer- it takes Time.

Make no mistake about it- Prayer will cause you to either neglect other things or you will continue to do those other things and neglect Prayer. Now I want to mention a few Issues about Prayer before I exposit the text of verses 9-13. And the *main* thing I want you to know about Prayer is that ALL our Praying MUST be what I call, "**God-centered**".

Jesus taught us here to make all our praying, "God-centered". When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray- He started off in **Matthew 6:9&10** and said:

Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

... so these are all Requests. And these are all centered around WHO God is.

All of the Subjects covered by the Lord's Prayer are "Requests". We are to "ask" God to do this. And Jesus said that our *first* Desire- our *first* Request- what we should ask for and want the MOST- is that God's Holy and Great Name would be "hallowed" or glorified; that His Kingdom would advance in the earth and come; and that God's Will is done on the earth just like God's Will is done in Heaven!

And even though we are all certainly involved in all of this- these first Requests are all about God. And that is what I mean when I say that Prayer must be radically "God-centered". The Glory of God's Name; the Advancement and ultimate Triumph of God's Kingdom; and the "doing: of God's Will on this earth- are the primary Concerns of genuine, biblical Prayer. And that means that the things that may make our lives more comfortable down here- are NOT.

Now most of us know the difference between "immature Prayer" that is focused *primarily* on us and what we want and "mature, God-centered Prayer" that is focused *primarily* on God and His Will. We know we are in a different Atmosphere- *a much higher one*- when we hear someone pray in accord with these

biblical Priorities that Jesus teaches here because they just “ring true” in our ears. And that means that praying with God- centered Priorities should be taught and learned in Church.

Now for many years- I believed that a good Prayer Meeting was one where the people cried out loud to God; with lots of volume; and lots of emotion; and lots of passion. And that is because I think that anything that is loud and passionate and emotional is great. I think eating dinner with my Family is better if it is loud and emotional and filled with passion. And look, passionate, emotional, and loud Prayers are fine- but if we do not pray with these holy, biblical, God-centered Priorities- if our Prayers are not Biblical; if what we ask of God is not God’s Will and is not radically God- centered; and does not seek to glorify God's Name; and seek to advance the Kingdom of God; and to see God’s Will done on earth- then all the Emotion in the world will not make God answer us. And I base that on what God told the Prophet in Ezekiel **36:23**:

I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD , declares the Lord GOD , when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

God is saying here that He will “see to it” that His Name WILL be vindicated among all the nations as being both True and Glorious. But God has decreed that *we* will have a hand in this Triumph; and that we play a part in God vindicating the Holiness of His great Name; and that is through our Prayers. So, we MUST always seek to make the “Glory of God” the very center of our Prayers. And as we do that- not only will we see God move in response to our Prayers- but we will also experience the fullness of Joy as well.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.