

How to Pray I

Fred R. Coulter—December 16, 2000

One of the most important things that we can do as Christians is *pray!* Before we get into it, I would like to read you what some have put out as the *New School Prayer*. Since you can't pray in school, here's what they have:

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.
And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a Federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple, orange or green,
That's no offense; it's a freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise.
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.
In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the state.

We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks.
They've outlawed guns, but FIRST the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the 'unwed daddy,' our Senior King.
It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such "judgments" do not belong.

We can get our condoms and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles.
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot; my soul please take!

Amen! (*teenager from Bagdad, Arizona;*
Jan. 2000).

Jim gave it to me off the internet, and he didn't know that my sermon topic today was going to be *prayer*. That's quite a way to open it, so, you see, God works out things in different ways—doesn't He? Let's start out with *what not to do*. We will

cover *what to do*, but let's first of all start out with *what not to do*.

Matthew 6:7: "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions... [We'll see a little later on that sometimes you have to be very persistent in prayer, until God answers the prayer. And those then (we will see) are not *vain repetitions*.] ...do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*..." You can hear this with the Buddhists; you can hear this with the Catholics—especially 'hail Marys' and 'our fathers'; and I don't know about the Muslims, but they have beads that they use for praying—and it's a certain prayer on a certain bead. They think that with their *vain repetitions* in other words, lots of noise; do it over and over and over again; keep at it, keep at it, keep at it—that they will be heard.

Now, that's what we are *not* to do! Let's look at another thing we are not to do. Let's go to Isaiah, the first chapter, and let's see what this nation is doing.

I will have to say that I saw on C-Span part of the church service—prayer service—to send George W. Bush off to Washington, D.C. Part of it was very good and they did use the Bible, which for just carnal Israel is about the most you can expect. In the letter, I think we're going to see more honesty, more honor, more things within law than we have in the past with the lawless President and Vice-President [Clinton/Gore] that we have had. But when it becomes pure lawlessness—(go back and listen to the series on human nature, where I explained about good, decent people in the world, even though they're not called)—that God holds them accountable and responsible for the direction of the nation. So, I hope with this election that there will be a turn back. Howbeit, it won't be total repentance to God. But at least maybe the tide of lawlessness can be stemmed. But when it isn't, look at what it is here:

Isaiah 1:2: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth... [Why does God use this? *Because He told Israel: 'I set before you life and death, good and evil, blessing and cursing—therefore, choose life that you and your seed may live. I call heaven and earth against you this day.'* So it is the witness. Heaven and earth is the witness to everything that God does. So, if you want proof about God's witness, you walk on it, you look at it, you use it, you drive on it, you see it.] ...for the Lord has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass His master's crib, *but* Israel does not know; My people do not consider. Ah, sinful

nation, a people laden with [sin] iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (vs 2-4). Now, just exactly how God does this—in measuring the righteousness of a nation (we covered that in view of the election)—when the whole nation goes that way, all they do is just destroy themselves more and more.

“Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate... [That’s what it’s going to turn to. All you need to do to find out the power and wrath of God against sin is look at the unholy land today—barren, desolate, filled with terror, war and killing, intrigue and hatred.] ...your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence... [and that’s what’s happening to us today.] ...and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.” (vs 5-8). Now, the ‘daughter of Zion’ here really is the Church. We find ourselves just like that—as a ‘cottage in a vineyard and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers and as a besieged city.’ Sometimes day-to-day that’s the way you feel: *besieged by all of these things*.

“Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant... [and I think we can look at the ‘remnant’ not only being the Church, but there are a ‘remnant’ of decent, sincere people out there who are running and governing this nation, who want to do it in an honorable way, in a law-abiding way.] ...we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah....” (v 9) And they’re trying to stop all that; and that’s why I’m very happy that the scene has changed, because if you understand the agenda that was going to be brought on—if the Democrats continued to be in control—we’re reading it right here: Sodom and Gomorrah.

So, God says: “Hear the Word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.... [Now, here’s what we’re not to do]: ...‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?’.... [Which then is what? *Vain repetitions*—just doing it over and over and over again. Why should you sin and use the name of God? *That’s what He’s talking about here.*] ...says the LORD. ‘I am full of the

burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?’” (vs 10-12). And we’ll see that’s because there is no repentance. You can liken that to those who go to their Sunday churches and don’t repent. God will accept repentance regardless of who it is; regardless of where they are—as we’ll see a little later on is one of the keys for prayer.

“...who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations... [We’re not to do that. ‘Oblation’ in our lives can be: instead of repentance, we go out and try doing something else. In other words, you substitute your own works in hopes you’ll make it right, instead of repenting because you have a guilty conscience and you won’t repent.] ...incense is an abomination unto Me... [and ‘incense’ (we’ll see a little later on) is likened unto prayer.] ...the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies... [Those are their *new moons*] ...I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts... [not God’s—the ones they substituted and replaced with] ...My soul hates; they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood’” (vs 12-15). And all of those are the things we are *not* to do.

Let’s come here to 1-Kings 18:17, and let’s see the *vain repetitions*—this is the account with Elijah. “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, ‘Are you he that troubles Israel?’.... [Of course he wasn’t. He was there with the widow and her son for over three years.] ...And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father’s house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed Baalim.... [Now remember, Ahab’s wife was who? *Jezebel!* Who was Jezebel? *She was the daughter of the high priest of Baal at Tyre.* And her daughter was Athaliah who wanted to destroy the king line—remember that? So we’re dealing with a lot of treachery here.] ...Now therefore, send and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table” (vs 18-19). Now, we’re talking about state religion here.

“So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, ‘How long halt you between two opinions?.... [That’s quite interesting—isn’t it? In other words,

God was no longer a fact. It was an opinion. ‘What do you believe?’ *Well, I believe Baal is god. What do you believe?* ‘Oh, I believe the Lord is God.’ But it’s an opinion. There are a lot of people today who have opinions. And as Glenn Daniel put it: ‘There are many people who have just enough religion that they feel, if they’re in trouble, they can go to God. And they have just enough religion that they can still be comfortable with the world.’ So what they’re dealing with, they’re dealing with *opinions* rather than knowledge of fact.] (So, Elijah laid it on the line): ...‘How long halt you between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (vs 20-21)—because they didn’t know what to say.

So, you know the rest of the story: He said, ‘Okay, you bring the bullocks here. We’ll let all the prophets of Baal go first, for there are many. Elijah said, ‘You choose the bullocks; you set up the altar and don’t put any fire on it.’ And the One Who answers by fire is God! He said, ‘You call upon the name of your god; put no fire under it’ (vs 22-25 *paraphrased*)

Verse 26: “And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, ‘Baal, hear us....’ Have you ever heard the *Elijah* by Mendelssohn? The oratorio for Baal is something! It’s really catchy! When I listen to it I try and pass by it because I don’t want it flying through my brain, but it goes like this: *Hear us O’ Baal, Hear us O’ Baal*—it’s really a catchy thing! It’s just like a lot of the Christmas carols and things that you hear today; they’re so catchy! Everything that Baal does is made to sound good and look good. ‘O Baal, hear us!’

“But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.... [So, we had a Pentecostal movement here—going around waving your arms, crying out to god, speaking in tongues!] ...And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, ‘Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing... [‘You don’t have his attention yet?'] ...or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked” (vs 26-27). How many times in our attitude toward God do we do the same thing? *God doesn’t want to hear me. He’s got more important things to do. I’m not important to Him. Why does God care about me?*

“...or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked.’ And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them....” (vs 27-28). We

even have this today in the Philippines—what do we have? *We have men that, every year around Easter time*—right at Easter—generally three of them take and they lash their backs with these little whips. And, of course, that one of the penance that the Catholic Church recommends for those who have really sinned. You get this little whip and it’s got long lashes and you just throw it over your shoulder and you beat your back; you alternate one side and then the other, and you bleed! That’s what they were doing. In the Philippines they do that; and then they have them crucified—they run the nails right through their hands and right through their feet. And they put this up as a great thing. This is close to what you can do to please God; because you’re suffering! That’s what they were doing here—similar to it.

“And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice... [it really means until the time of the sacrifice that Elijah did—which was not at the time of the evening sacrifice—supposedly, either toward sunset or at three in the afternoon. It was just when midday was past at the offering of the sacrifice which Elijah was going to give.] ...that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded” (v 29).

Then we’re given an example of what we should do. Obviously, we’re not to make an altar and put a bullock on it. Of course, Elijah did this. He said to put the water on it—do it twice; do it three times. And of course, in the middle of a drought when water was hard to come by, this was really something! It ran all over the place, and then:

Verse 36: “And it came to pass at the time of **the offering of the sacrifice**... [that’s what it should read] ...that Elijah the prophet came near, and said... [Here’s something that *we are to do!* Notice: It’s not *the length* of the prayer. It is not *the repetition* of the prayer. **It is the belief and firm knowledge!** That’s why one of the first things that a person does when they’re called: first of all they

- prove that God exists
- you know that you know that you know that God exists
- you understand that He is always there
- that His ear is always open

—so Elijah knew, and said]: ...‘LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their heart back again.” (vs 36-37). Now, that took what?—15 seconds? 20 seconds? Remember Jesus’ prayer when He raised Lazarus?

What did He say? He said, ‘Father, I thank You that You hear Me always.’ And then said, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’

In this case, v 38: “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, ‘The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God’” (vs 38-39). When Christ returns there’s going to be a lot of that going on, and there are going to be a lot of ‘prophets of Baal’ who are going to be repenting. They’re going to get rid of their black robes and their backward collars—if they survive the vengeance of *the beast*. And they’re going to be a lot of nun’s clothes thrown down, and they’re going to say, ‘Hey! No way! No more!’ The Dalai Lama is going to go get a sandwich at the deli. No more high mucky-mucks or lower mucky-mucks.

Let’s come to Jeremiah 7 and we’ll see another thing. Here’s a good example, which we’ve gone over many, many times. And in this we’re going to see some of things we shouldn’t do and also some of the things that we should do.

Jeremiah 7:1 “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ‘Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this Word, and say, “Hear the Word of the LORD, all you of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Amend your ways... [And that’s the whole thing we’ll see a little later on. Whenever you come before God, you come in a repentant attitude—always! I think the longer I live and the more that I live God’s way and pray, the more that I understand that repentance is an attitude that we have to be in all the time—toward God!] ...‘Amend your ways and your doings... [and sometimes that’s hard to do—He’ll help us!] ...and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust you not in lying words, saying, “The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.”’”” (vs 1-4). So, we can’t be trusting in physical things. That’s why there’s no more temple. That’s why we have access to the temple in heaven above (as we’ll see a little bit later)—direct access!

“For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt... [What always happens when we start sinning and allow sin to take place? *You’re still religious*, so what you do, you go after other gods. And isn’t that what we saw

happen even within the Church of God? Did they not do that? *Yes!*] ...Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words, that cannot profit.... [That’s why you always have to be in an attitude of repentance; so that there is entrance for Truth! Otherwise you *trust in lying words that can’t profit.*] ...Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal... [Our prayers (as we will see) are like incense.] ...and walk after other gods whom you know not... [that’s why this whole ecumenical thing is such an *evil* thing that’s going on in the world today.] ...And come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are delivered to do all these abominations?”” (vs 5–10). In other words, we have the *grace of God* which covers all of this—NO! We’re not to take out license.

Let’s see the thing that’s more important with God than anything else. Verse 23: “But this thing commanded I them, saying, ‘**Obey my voice**... [And as we’ve seen how many times: Is that not the whole summary of the Bible. If you want to summarize the Bible in three words it is this: **obey MY voice**. We have it written down—don’t we?] ...and I will be your God, and you shall be My people... [and, of course, that’s one of the things we are to do. We see this over and over again.] ...and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.’” Of course, they didn’t listen.

Let’s just see a general principle. This kind of sums up everything that we’ve covered up to this point, so far. Proverbs 15:8 “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD... [We’re going to see a lot of sacrificing going on in the way of giving money to charity and things at this Christmas time—aren’t we? We’re going to see many of the movie stars and rock stars and important people who are primarily responsible for bringing evil into this land. They are going to give money to help this cause, that cause and the other cause. But God says it’s an ‘abomination to Him.’] (Notice the last part of this): ...but **the prayer of the upright is His delight**.”

God delights in prayer. And many times, when we delay praying—which I’ve done and you’ve done—because of a guilty conscience where we’ve had a big blooper. There are some mistakes which are ‘little’ mistakes; there are other mistakes which are ‘medium size’ mistakes; then there are ‘big’ mistakes; and then there are real ‘bloopers’! When you get a real ‘blooper’ you just don’t feel like going to God. So you delay going to God. Think about it! If you’re repenting God delights in your

coming to Him, even though you have to confess and say how wrong you were. Then we'll see a little later on, then you understand how bad it really was.

Verse 9: "The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but He loves him that follows after righteousness." So that is a summary of everything that we've covered up to this point. Now, let's ask the questions:

- What is the purpose of prayer? (before we get into anything on *how to pray*)
- What is the purpose of prayer?
- Is it so that you have God in your hip-pocket, that you have just enough religion that you can call on God and get out of trouble?
- What is it for?

As we've covered concerning the purpose of the ministry, it's for the perfecting of the saints. Well, Christ has some perfecting that He's going to do in you; which alone Christ can do because it's all what Christ is doing, because He's going to fulfill it all. So prayer is ***the key important thing***.

- But what is the purpose of it?
- Is it to make you feel better?
- Is it to get rid of the guilty conscience?
- Is to pray and curse your enemies?
- Is it to pray and get more money

—like most of the religious programs now are following the thing that you get more money, you give to me, you give to this program and God will bless you and give you more money.

- Is that all it is?
- Is it just a shopping list so you can have what you want?
- That's not much different than all the kids going to Santa—is it?
- How stupid are we as little kids?

I remember when I was a kid, kept Christmas. You think Santa Claus us going to bring these things to you. But lo and behold, the department stores that you go to see Santa, where you sit in his lap, is filled with everything you want. And your mother takes you around and asks you: 'What do you want Santa to bring you?' Do you want him to bring you this? Do you want him to bring you that? We believe it! No, it's not a Santa Claus wish list. It serves a greater, greater purpose.

Now let's begin right here in 1-John 1:1: "That which was from *the* beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our own eyes, that which we observed for ourselves and our own hands handled, concerning the Word of life... [He is basing what he's writing here on the very

existence and purpose of Christ.] ... (and the life was manifested, and we have seen... [Yes, God manifest in the flesh] ... and are bearing witness, and are reporting to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us); that which we have seen and have heard we are reporting to you in order that you also may have fellowship with us; for the fellowship—indeed, our fellowship—is with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ" (vs 1-3). ***That is the purpose of prayer!*** You cannot have any fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ unless you pray. And that's why God has given you the Holy Spirit.

And even as the Apostle Paul had to tell Timothy: 'Stir up the spirit that is in you by the laying on of my hands.' We, as human beings with our sin and weaknesses, kind of run just like some the charts and graphs—we have our highs and we have our lows, and that's just the nature of being human. So when you have a high, rejoice in it. When you have a low, be thankful for it—and ask God to help you learn. Hopefully, we'll all end up with more highs and less lows. Sometimes we get so many lows, it's kind of like 'walking through the valley of death.' And it doesn't seem like you'll ever find the side of the canyon. So there it is—fellowship!

"These things we are also writing to you, so that your joy may be completely full.... [Then he goes on and shows that the very first thing for the fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is repentance—though, he doesn't use the word *repentance*.] ... And this is the message that we have heard from Him and are declaring to you: that God is light, and there is no darkness at all in Him" (vs 4-5). In other words:

- God is perfect
 - God is love
 - God is power
 - God is eternal
- all the attributes of God

If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth.... [And we're going to see here in just a little bit, who's the first one we deceive? *Your own self!* That's where all deception begins—with the self. Either you deceive yourself, or you want to be deceived; or you convince yourself that the evil that you're doing is good and right and justified when it's not. And we'll cover all that, too.] ... If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness... [that is having grafted in the ways of Satan the devil in the way we act and behave and do] ... we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth. However, if we walk in

the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another...” (vs 1-7).

And, of course, then fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ—not only fellowship with each other—but more importantly, fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. When you don’t have that fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, what happens to the relationships within the congregation? *Well, it becomes a social club*, and soon after everything is based upon: you go to church because of your friends; you don’t go to church to learn of God. Then your friends end up becoming your idol and the whole relationship that you had deteriorates. That’s why God has scattered and we’re in smaller groups and we’re building again from ground-zero up.

“...if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another and... [Now, here’s the thing that’s important, the key thing in prayer]: ...**the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin**” (vs 7). *Every sin!* What sins can God forgive? *All sins, upon repentance!* If there’s the ‘unpardonable sin’ there’s *no repentance*. If there is repentance, God will forgive.

Let’s go to 2-Chronicles 33. Now the reason I’m going here is because I’ve had people write me and say, ‘Have I committed the unpardonable sin?’ The answer basically is this: *If you’re worried about it, no you haven’t—you need to go repent*, because, if you have committed the ‘unpardonable sin’ you wouldn’t care. The reason I’m going here is so that we can understand that in our relationship with God dealing with us. He says He cleanses us from all sin—*every sin*—let’s see an example of what you could call the worst sinner. Or you could also say, as the Apostle Paul did, when he was Saul, that he was ‘chief sinner.’ Let’s look and see what he did, and I want you to ask yourself the question here, as we go through: Have I done any of these things?

Also, let’s understand, that this gives hope for our brethren in some of the larger Churches of God who have gone to Sunday-keeping. There’s still hope; always remember this: ***As long as there is life, there is hope! Always!*** And sometimes when we put ourselves what we consider a hopeless situation—we think that there’s no way out—we just say well, God go ahead and do it to me. God doesn’t want to do anything to anyone, except that they repent. He doesn’t even delight in the death of the wicked.

Notice Manasseh, he started out young and early—didn’t he? 2-Chronicles 33:1: “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem... [55 years! That’s a long time, so 12+55 means that he

was 67—right?] ...but did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (vs 1-2).

Notice what he did: “For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down... [Have any of you done that? Is this not deliberate? Does this not take plans? Does this not take money and financing to do? *Yes, it does!*] ...and he reared up altars for Baalim... [and that’s all the gods of Baal] ...and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them” (v 3)

Now, if you would like to know kind of what the scene was like, just picture St. Peter’s Basilica, where they have the obelisk right in the middle and you all know what that stands for. And you have all of the saints on top of the colonnades as it goes all around the inner court of St. Peter’s Basilica. And it would be just like the Catholics do today: go before these idols and pray, and do whatever it is that you do.

“...worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.... [Notice what else he did]: ...Also he built altars in the house of the LORD... [Right there in the courtyard he put idols for the pagan gods!] ...whereof the LORD had said, ‘In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.’ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD” (vs 3-5). Have any of us done anything like that? *No!* Is this deliberate? Is this planning? *Yes!* I imagine he said that this was one of the greatest ecumenical movements in the world. ‘Look how nice this is, everyone. We can serve everybody. We can serve all the gods. Whatever your god is, come here to Jerusalem, it’s all sanctified by the Lord’s temple. This is really a wonderful, wonderful thing. And look, we’re all getting along. Moreover, we’re going to have some fun on Halloween!’

“And he caused his children to pass through the fire... [of course, this was not just innocent, this was *child-sacrifice*.] ...in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times... [Have you observed *times*? Are you observing *times*? *No!*] ...and used enchantments, and used witchcraft... [I don’t know anybody who’s done any of these things] ...and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.... [Notice, God let him go 55 years! That’s amazing!] ...And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made... [that is caused to be made] ...in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever. Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed

for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses” (vs 6-8).

Now, let’s go to the parallel account in 2-Kings 23 ^[corrected]; and we’ll see what else he did. Sounds very reminiscent of what’s going on today. This is what Josiah did when he cleaned it up.

(go to the next track)

Let’s see what Josiah had to do to clean up the mess that Manasseh made when he was there; even though (as we’ll see a little later) Manasseh repented.

2-Kings 23:4: “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem... [There’s 55 years building this up] ...them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven... [Sounds like today’s society—doesn’t it? ‘What is your horoscope today? What sign are you born under?’] ...And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites... [So they had their ‘bath houses’ and their ‘orgy houses’ right there in the temple. This was ‘sacred sex.’] ...that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba...” (vs 4-8).

Now, this is an inkling of what’s going to happen when Christ returns and cleanses the whole world, which we’re going to have a part in.

Let’s come back to 2-Chronicles 33:9 and let’s finish it. “So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.” So this was really a thing! And the reason that I’m bringing this out is so that one of the things we need to understand is that when we sin and we get a guilty conscience and we start carrying that guilty conscience in such a way that we

use it as *penance* rather than *repentance*. But I want everyone to consider is this: Has any single one of us ever done anything over as long a period as this was done and had done the things that Manasseh had done? *No! No!*

Verse 10: And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon” (vs 10-11). And everyone who was looking to righteousness probably said ‘good riddance to bad rubbish—finally, we’ve been oppressed by this thing for so long; now we can breathe a little bit.’

But notice what happened. You would think that after all that he did, he would have seared his conscience so much that nothing would have mattered. “And when he was in affliction... [and that’s why we need to look upon the trials that come upon us; because sometimes our trials are real afflictions!] ...he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him... [Did God listen to him? *Yes!*] ...and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication... [You can almost imagine what it was like, because he was probably in some dungeon there in Babylon, chained. And this also required God to change the mind of the leaders of Babylon—which, at that time, was ruled by the Assyrians.] ...and brought him again to Jerusalem... [He became a vassal king; put him back in Jerusalem, and he finished out his reign.] (Now notice what happened): ...brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom...” (vs 12-13). Now, you just don’t do that! What do the Assyrians always do with their captors? *They send them way off—don’t they? Yes!* Today, they use cattle-cars; they can move them quicker.

“...**Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God**... [notice what he did in his repentance]: ...Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD... [And his son Ammon reigned two years—put it all back and then Josiah came after that.] ...and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel” (vs 13-16).

Now, that is some repentance! You talk about a turnaround in someone's life. You can look at everything that is here and you look at that. Unrepented he's headed straight for the lake of fire—correct? Having repented of it, God reinstated him. *Yes!*

He couldn't get all of the rest of the people to go along with it completely. Verse 17: "Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only." So, what they did, they just took the names of the pagan gods off and said, 'Okay, we'll do it to the name of the Lord—which is what? **Half repentance on the part of the people.**

"Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.... [which that part of the book we no longer have] ...His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers" (vs 18-19).

I want us to understand something very important. Let's come back to 1-John, the first chapter. When it talks back here about forgiving *all* your sins, **God does!** When you go pray and confess your sins, claim the promise that God **will forgive them**, for His namesake—not for your goodness-sake or for what you do. But because He has promised, and if God has promised—and God does not lie—and you can look out here and see the heavens and the earth, you know for sure your prayer is heard and your sins have been forgiven. Do not get up from any prayer and say, 'Well, I wonder if He's forgiven me for this.' Remember this: If He can forgive Manasseh and bring him back, He can forgive every one of us and bring us back—can He not? *No doubt about it!*

Let's read 1-John 1:7 again: "However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from **all sin**. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves... [That's the first sign of deception when you think that you're always right! You think yourself you're right, in spite of what the Word of God says. You know that's when you get yourself in trouble, and I know that's when I get myself in trouble—right?] ...and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our own sins... [that's why there has to be repentance; we confess our sins. And we will see at what time in a prayer—or what section of type of praying—that we do this. If you've found yourself in

a lot of sin, the first thing you do is say, 'Oh, God, forgive me for my sins'—right off, first thing, right out of the shoot.] ...If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned... [v 8 is a little different, 'if we have no sin'—that is we do not have a sinful nature. 'We're all good people, Lord.' *No! we deceive ourselves.*] ...If we say that we have not sinned... [that is by our actions and our thoughts and our attitudes and so forth] ...we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us" (vs 7-10).

1-John 2:1: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And *yet*, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ *the Righteous*—" Christ is there waiting for us to repent. He is advocating for us to repent. And sometimes we have to go to Christ and say, 'Oh please, grant me an attitude of repentance; and help me to see and help me to understand, and give me the strength. Christ is advocating for you.

"...an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ *the Righteous*—and He is *the* propitiation for our sins... [and that means the *atonement*, the fullness of Christ that comes from Christ.] (And so great is this 'propitiation' for our sins): ...and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*" (vs 1-2). And, of course, we know that is in God's plan and in His due time.

Now, let's understand something that we need to really grasp. Let's come to Hebrews, chapter 10. This is something we need to grasp and to understand, because lots of times our own human nature, our own guilt, all of these things that come upon us—which they do when you sin, they do. When you sin and have a guilty conscience, what is that? *That's God's Spirit working with you, hopefully to lead you to repentance. Yield to it, so that you do repent!*

Hebrews 10:16: "'This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,' says *the* Lord: 'I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds... [and *that's the whole purpose of prayer and fellowship and repentance and knowing God's way.* He wants them in our hearts and minds.] (Notice the rest of the bargain): ...and **their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again**'" (vs 16-17). If you believe that God hears you; and if you believe that God forgives you; do you likewise believe that **"their sins and iniquities I will remember no more"**? That's important to understand. *No one can ever have his or her conscience cleansed until you understand that.*

Now, let's go to Psalm 103, because God does not want us to have any doubt whatsoever. He gives the guarantee that when you repent He forgives. And He gives the guarantee that He will not remember your sins any longer, even though Satan the devil himself may accuse you day and night before the throne of God.

Psalm 103:8: "The LORD is merciful and gracious... [and we've seen that with Manasseh—haven't we? We've seen that in our own lives. God is interested in mercy. He told the lawyer, after He was questioned about what is the greatest commandment, He said, 'You're to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength.' And the lawyer said, 'You've answered correctly.' And to love God is more than all burnt offerings.] ...The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." That's why God does not zoom down and smack you every time you sin.

When I do my water exercise I help the manager. In the pool—at the five foot depth where I stand and I do my leg kicks and everything—right at eye-level is the edge of the pool they have ants coming down there all the time. So while I'm doing my exercise, I 'execute' every ant that comes by me. Yesterday was an especially fruitful day—had lots of ant corpses up there on the edge of the pool. But, you know, sometimes we feel that God deals with us like the ant. Every time we do something, God comes down and smashes us. No! He doesn't! "The LORD is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**... [that's why you have not been zapped out in just a scorch of fire!] ...and plenteous in mercy." He never runs out of mercy.

What did God say in the book of Exodus 34:5: "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the LORD.... [This is God talking to Moses when he wanted to see God's glory—this is afterward.] ...And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth**... [Moses just finished persuading God not to destroy all the children of Israel—right?—for their great sin!] ...**keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty... [that is if there's no repentance.] ...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (vs 5-7)—that is where there is no repentance.

Psalm 103:9: "He will not always chide... [that is He will not always correct] ...neither will He keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us after

our sins... [Did He deal with Manasseh after his sins. Were not every one of those things that He said there—if you read in the law—worthy of death and stoning or burning—correct? *Yes!* Did God do that to him? *No!* Did he repent? *Yes!* God hasn't dealt with us after our sins. And surely, if God did not deal with Manasseh after his sins, surely He doesn't deal with us after our sins!] ...nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (vs 9-10)—because God gives us time and space to repent.

Notice when we do repent: "For as the heaven is high above the earth... [How high is that? How far does the universe go?] ...so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.... [and how much more so to those that love Him?] ...As far as the east is from the west... [When He says He forgets our iniquities, how far is the east from the west? *Literally, when you go out in space it's infinity!* They never meet.] ...so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame... [because He made us] ...He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.... [just for a time] ...For the wind passes over it, and it is gone... [have you seen anything concerning the Kalahari Desert in West Africa? It doesn't rain for maybe ten years. And then when it rains. BAM! up come all these flowers and all the fish hatch out and all of the toads and frogs and all the starving animals have a great feast—and it's amazing what happens! But just in a matter of weeks it's all back and it all shrivels up and it's all gone! Shortest lifecycle in the world, with the longest space in between seed and growth—and it's gone!] ...and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more" (vs 11-16).

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting... [How much mercy is that? Well, if you can measure from everlasting to everlasting—which you can't—then you'll know how much mercy that is. That's why the first thing that God told Moses was: 'The Lord is merciful and gracious'] ...upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (vs 17-18).

Now, let's come back to Hebrews, the tenth chapter, because this is the whole important thing when we pray, that being able to come to God with a confidence and faith that He will hear us, and with the understanding that God knows us. When we're very carnal and mean and nasty, God knows, and He gives us space to repent—doesn't He? *Yes!* So, when we come to ourselves—and that's what repentance is all about—having the attitude of repentance. When we come to ourselves we come back to God.

Hebrews 10:17: "...and their sins and lawlessness **I will not remember ever again.**" What does that mean? *That means NO MORE! Never again!* Shall not be spoken of. It's been erased. It has been obliterated. It has been blotted out by the greatest and highest power on earth: God the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ, because He is the 'propitiation' of our sins.

Verse 18: "Now where remission of these *is*, it is no longer *necessary to offer* [animal] sacrifices for sin... [How can there be? In other words, when your sins are forgiven, there is no physical thing you can do to improve upon that forgiveness (if we could put it that way). Yes, you may have to go make amends or whatever that is, but that's mercy that you're giving back mercy because you received mercy. And always remember this—one of the beatitudes is: **Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.** That's one of the things I always try and remember. I need mercy. I need lots of mercy. So, therefore, you better be merciful, Fred. If you are not merciful, then you're not going to receive mercy. We'll look at some parables a little later on about that.

Notice—v 19: "Therefore, brethren, having [boldness] confidence... [here's where our prayers come. This is the authority that Jesus Christ and God the Father has given to anyone who will come in a repentant attitude and pray to God. And even if you have God's Spirit and you're not as repentant of attitude as you ought to be, and you go pray to God, He'll lead you to repentance. It may come at a later time, but it will come.] ...to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus..."

This means that when you say, 'Our Father,' you have direct access to the Sovereign Ruler of this universe. I want you to think on that! I want you to grasp that!

- You need help in your life
- You need help to overcome
- You need help with your attitude
- You need mercy and kindness and forgiveness

You are coming to the Sovereign Ruler of this universe to receive it—God the Father!—through the blood of Jesus Christ. So therefore, you go through the steps as we find there in 1-John, the first chapter. And if you trap yourself, deceive yourself, into long-term sin—and every one of us do for a long time. What happens? ***What we need to do is just ask God to help us to see the greatness of that sin; the severity of that sin; and repent and change.*** And if we go and ask God to forgive us and we really don't feel repentant the way that maybe we think we ought to, don't worry:

- God will grant complete repentance

- He'll work with you
 - He'll convict your mind
 - He'll convict your conscience
- because you have the Spirit of God. So stir it up!

"[This is] by a new and living way, which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh), and *having* a great High Priest over the house of God... [over all of God's people. And if every one of the people of God would, at the same instant in time whether day or night on the earth, would all pray to God, Christ and God the Father are able to hear and answer each one of those prayers individually! That's something to keep in mind.] (Notice what we are to do—what does this do for us?): ...**let us approach God with a true** heart... [let God take away the deception] ...with full conviction of faith... [rather than the lack of faith, because we're dealing with the existence of heaven and earth and the very power of God—are we not?] ...our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience... [or that is a conscience convicting us because of sin] ...and our bodies having been washed with pure water. Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful" (vs 20-23).

- Do you believe God?
- Do you believe His Word?

He is faithful! He has promised! Even if you look at yourself as the worst sinner in the world, as bad as Manasseh, ***He has promised and for His sake He will forgive upon repentance.***

Now, let's look at a couple of things which are very important. And many times, when we have let sin grow and sprout—what does it say about lust? *When lust conceives it brings forth sin* and all this sort of thing. You sort of toyed around with lust, or hatred, or anger, vengeance; or on the other hand self-righteousness and how good and all this sort of thing is. Like the Pharisee who came and said, 'Lord, I'm so glad I'm not like this other person over here—this publican. I am so good! Oh, You've got to hear me!' The key was, Jesus said he prayed to himself, it didn't get above out of his own mind.

What did the publican do? He beat on his chest and said, 'God, forgive me, a sinner.' Now, sometimes that's all we can do. And sometimes if we've been slack in praying or letting sin build up in our lives, that's the place we need to begin to be restored back to God, because He wants you back and it begins that way.

Now, let's come to Romans, the eighth chapter, because this is important. What if you just kind of run out of words? Or what if you're so ashamed you don't even know how to repent. You

get on your knees and you just kind rock back and forth and you just kind of think a little bit. What about that? *That's a start.* Does God acknowledge that? Will God hear that? *Yes!*

Romans 8:26: “Now in the same way also, the Spirit is conjointly helping our weaknesses... [our human weaknesses—‘infirmities’ (*KJV*) is more like sicknesses rather than shortcomings of human nature.] ...because we do not fully understand what we should pray for, according as it is necessary... [It’s obligatory. If you don’t know what to say, just say, ‘God, I don’t know what to say.’ Let your thoughts and your attitudes, let God help you with His Spirit.] (here’s what happens): ...but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed *by us*. And the one Who searches the hearts comprehends what the strivings of the Spirit *are* because it makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.... [In other words, the Spirit is that which is communicating your thoughts to God, and the Spirit is interpreting them to God *according to your attitude*—and that’s what comes before God. Another good thing about this is: When you’re praying and you have extraneous thoughts come through your mind—did I lock the car; did I leave the oven on; did I leave the keys in my car; I forgot to pay the bill; I got the notice and they’re going to shut off the gas and electric now; after they jacked the price up three times. So the Spirit is doing this for you—that’s why it’s so important, the Spirit of God. It filters out all of that nonsense. That doesn’t go before God. The true, deep, inner thoughts of your heart and mind are then conveyed to God. That’s what’s important.] ...And the One Who searches the hearts [God] comprehends what the strivings of the Spirit *are* because it makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*” (vs 26-27).

That’s how you’re led to repentance. They come right up before God (as we’ll see a little later on) like incense—right up to the very throne of God; right up to the Holy of Holies. So when you start considering all of that and you put that all together, you understand why God hates religion, where men organize people and put them in ranks and all this sort of thing and try and have a substitute way for God. No, that won’t work.

Also, have this confidence—sometimes this is hope for hope’s sake, like Abraham: ‘At 100 this is going to happen? And my wife, at 90, this is going to happen? He hoped in hope, and here’s hope’s sake right here—v 28: “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God...** [You have to love God first so you can understand all the trials and difficulties that you’re going through. Some of them may be of long duration. Some of them may be in repetition. Some of them

may be problems and difficulties of which you’re trying to help someone and it’s very difficult to reach them because of the condition and attitude that they are in. But maybe, if you keep at it, you can reach them and help them. It works for good! And what does it teach you in the process? It teaches you mercy and graciousness and love and kindness in the face of some of the worst things that may come up.] **...to those who are called according to His purpose**” (v 28).

So everything that happens in your life—whether for good or whether for evil; whether for pleasure, whether for trial, whether for joy or trauma is going to work for good if you let God’s Spirit work.

Old Testament Scriptures from the *King James Version*
New Testament Scriptures from *The New Testament in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 6:7
- 2) Isaiah 1:2-15
- 3) 1 Kings 18:17-29, 36-39
- 4) Jeremiah 7:1-10, 23
- 5) Proverbs 15:8-9
- 6) 1 John 1:1-7
- 7) 2 Chronicles 33:1-8
- 8) 2 Kings 23:4-8
- 9) 2 Chronicles 33:9-19
- 10) 1 John 1:7-10
- 11) 1 John 2:1-2
- 12) Hebrews 10:16-17
- 13) Psalm 103:8
- 14) Exodus 34:5-7
- 15) Psalm 103:9-18
- 16) Hebrews 10:17-23
- 17) Romans 8:26-28

FRC:bo
Transcribed: 12-01-09