

How to Pray IV

Fred R. Coulter—February 24, 2001

Let's understand something: *Prayer is the most vital, important thing for a Christian!* We will see *prayer* is when you talk to God and God hears you. We will also see that God talks to you. Now, how does God talk to you? You don't hear an audible voice. Sometimes thoughts come into your head that you know are from God. And other times thoughts come into your head you know it's just from your carnality. So God does not necessarily communicate that way. How does God talk to you? *Through His Word!* That's why you've heard prayer and study are the most important thing. And yes, those are the most important things, because as we started this whole series out, the *prayer* is really *fellowship* with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Prayer is what develops that relationship. Prayer and study is what develops then the trust and the faith and the love and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as you are led by the Spirit of God.

One thing we need to do in our prayers—and we will get into the beginning of what is called *The Lord's Prayer* a little later—one of the things that we need to understand is: *We always need to praise God!*—in our prayer and the things that we do.

Let's come back to the book of Psalms—as we have been doing, we've been going through the Psalms quite extensively; and the reason that we are is because these are written prayers. God inspired them to be written, and God inspired them for us as models for prayer. Also, these can be used if you have a hard time praying and you're just learning how to pray, you can open up the Bible to the book of Psalms and you can read these words (even out loud if you desire) and let those be your words and then be inspired to add your own words to it as you go along. This will help teach you how to pray—after all, most of the Psalms were written by David who was a man 'after God's heart.' So therefore, he knew how to pray. But what we are going to see is that when we get to the New Testament, God elevates the level of the relationship to a more intimate status.

Let's begin in Psalm 9. This is how we are to do everything that we do with God. Everything that we do with God, everything that we do in the way of God leading us and guiding us and directing us—God desires our whole being. So that's why here it starts out:

Psalm 9:1: "I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart... [Because that's what God wants. He wants you to be wholehearted to Him.] ...I will show forth all Your marvelous works." And

it's a very interesting thing that happens when you love God that way; when you praise God in your prayers that way; then what He is going to do, He's going to reveal things, through His Word, and by helping you because He 'tries the reins and the hearts' as we have seen. And God is going to give you understanding and help lead you in thoughts and so forth.

Therefore, you can: "...show forth His marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You... [Sometimes there are going to be prayers that are going to be that way—they're going to be glad and rejoicing. There are going to be other prayers which will be sad and downcast. There will be other prayers where you will need God to fight for you, as we have seen. There will be other prayers when it's just in thankfulness to God for everything that He has done—all of those.] (Here we have): ...I will sing praise to Your name, O You Most High" (vs 1-2).

So notice: *I will praise* You with my whole being. *I will sing* praise to Your name O Most High. So singing is also a part of it. Singing, in a way, is a type of prayer, though it's not exactly a prayer. A lot of it is praise. You go through some of the hymns that we have and every one of them that you will see and you really like and are inspiring, are those that look to God with everything. So praise Him with 'your whole heart' and so forth.

We've seen we're to praise God with our whole heart, with our whole being. Now here we have not only are we to praise God and praise His name. Psalm 54:1: "Save me, O God, by Your name, and judge me by Your strength." One of the things we need to understand about human beings is that God made us to need Him, and God made us so that He needs us—that's all part of His plan. So therefore, we're deficient; we need salvation. As imperfect as our human bodies may be, or as imperfect as they may become, we need salvation spiritually and physically from God.

Here's one thing that David did many times: He said, "Hear my prayer, O God... [So sometimes if you're having a hard time really understanding if God is listening to you, say]: ...Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.... [Especially when you're in trouble and you've got all these things looking like they are against you. And David did and Christ did.] ...For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them." (vs 2-3).

So they have their own ways, their own idols, everything.

Verse 4: “Behold, God is mine helper...[Always understand that! God is your Helper! He will help you! And as a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament—which is called a Comforter—could also be translated *helper*, because It helps our infirmities, helps our weaknesses, gives us strength of spirit.] ...the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.... [Now, obviously, that has to do with David, and that is true, those people uphold those that God is using—He is with them.] ...He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in Your Truth.... [And I’ve seen that happen over and over again. There have been those who have risen up as enemies. You’ve seen it in your life. You’ve seen it in the lives of others. God eventually takes care of them.] ...I will freely sacrifice unto You: I will praise Your name... [So there we are, praise the name] ...O LORD; for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye has seen His desire upon mine enemies” (vs 4-7).

So that also gives us another clue as to how to pray for our enemies. Pray for them that God will execute His will upon them—not our will. We don’t want to go to God and say, ‘God, take this person and destroy him.’ No! because that’s not what God wants us to do. Remember the account where James and John—as Christ was entering into the village, they didn’t receive Him well—got a little indignant. They said, ‘Lord, you want us to call fire down from heaven on them like Elijah did?’ and He said, ‘You don’t know what spirit you are in. The Son of man has not come to destroy lives, but to save lives.’ So if there’s an enemy, the greatest thing that can happen to an enemy is illustrated by one apostle. Who was that? *Greatest thing that can happen to an enemy is that he’s converted*, like Saul was—who became the Apostle Paul. And sometimes God will take a vehement enemy and do that. So that’s why we pray that God will intervene. Maybe they’ll be converted! Maybe they’ll repent! And if they do, fine!

Just like the man—remember the man who renounced Jesus Christ, caused a lot of trouble with the brethren and people and sent tapes and publications everywhere? Well, I went through a sermon and showed where he was totally wrong. And in the whole thing, we just asked God, ‘He’s committed into Your hands, O God.’ Three years later he wrote a letter and said that he had learned his lesson. He said that all the things that he was saying were wrong. He renounced Christ at that time. He said we don’t need the New Testament. And so, here he repented of all of that. This gives him a chance now to recoup, spiritually, before God.

Not only do we want God to deliver us from our troubles and save us from our enemies, but wouldn’t it be fantastic if more and more of the enemies would be converted? Now, some won’t! But it would be great if more and more would. You put the enemies in God’s hands, as well as your friends who are needing help. God knows what is best for each one. God knows whether a trial will help that individual; or encouragement would help that individual; or whether just letting them fall on their own devices will help them more than anything else. That way then they are given a chance to choose. Now, if they continually choose the wrong way, then it will end up like God did with Pharaoh. God hardened his heart, and then he softened it and repented. Then he changed his mind again and then God hardened his heart.

So you have the fact there that God is the one should make the decision on all of those things. And He’ll do it better! Did God not take care of Pharaoh better than any of the Israelites could have done, and teach an everlasting lesson? *Yes!*

Let’s come to Psalm 56:4: “In God I will praise His Word... [So, not only are we to praise God as a being and for His character of love and mercy and truth and forgiveness; but we’re to praise Him for His Word, because in that that’s the Word of salvation, and that is the way of the Lord and that is the way of Truth.] ...**in God I have put my trust**... [In all these things, in developing the relationship with God that you need, through prayer and study, then you can learn to put your trust in God in everything. And you learn not to trust your own devices.] ...**I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.**” Then you read the rest of it; this actually, I believe is describing what Jesus Christ went through.

Come back here to v 1: “Be merciful unto me, O God... [Did Christ have to pray that prayer? It says in Heb. 5 that He cried out with ‘strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save Him from death.’] ...for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresses me.... [David was not having people fighting him daily, oppressing him—but Christ was.] ...Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O You Most High” (vs 1-2).

Verse 5: Every day they wrest my words... [twist them; sounds like the media—doesn’t it?] ...all their thoughts are against me for evil.... [Now, that could only be of Christ.] ...They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. Shall they escape by iniquity? In Your anger cast down the people, O God” (vs 5-7). Isn’t that what He

eventually did after many, many warnings? *Yes!* So that applies right to Christ.

Let's come to Psalm 109. This shows us not only how to pray, but it gives us the understanding of it. And if we have an understanding of it, then that could become part of us; and when it becomes part of us and we grow in grace and knowledge and understanding and of God's Word, then prayer will be something we will do. We won't have to worry about: 'I wonder when I'll pray?' Well, maybe God is wondering if you are. You will pray automatically.

Psalm 109:30: "I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth... [So, all the praise that you have in your prayers. Why do we have this praise going to God? We'll see a little later it's because our prayers are to be God-centered, not self-centered—**God-centered!** Remember the self-centered prayer of the Pharisee who prayed to himself saying, 'God, I thank you I am not like other men'—etc., etc. That is a self-centered prayer!] ...yea, I will praise Him among the multitude. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul" (vs 30-31). So God is always there to help, to save, to intervene. Praising God is a mighty powerful and important part of your prayer.

Let's come to Psalm 135:1 Remember the song that we sing: *Praise ye the Lord, praise ye the Lord, praise Him in the heavens, praise Him in the heights...* Everything! "Praise you the LORD. Praise you the name of the LORD; praise Him, O you servants of the LORD. You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant. For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (vs 1-6). That ties in when we pray the model prayer as will find in Matt. 6 a little later on; that this is all a part of asking for God's will.

Now, let's go to Psalm 7 and we'll look at just a couple more here of praising God. I know when you really incorporate that into your prayers, and you really are understanding the magnitude of God, it'll help you understand the magnitude of your calling, as well. But that will help get your mind on God, not on yourself. It's all too easy, because you need help. You go pray about yourself first. That's why Christ shows that we look to God first. So praise is a great part of that.

Psalm 7:17: "I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness..." We can praise God

- because He's eternal
- because He's merciful
- because He forgives
- because He's righteous
- because He fights our battles for us
- because He loves us
- because He's called us
- because He hears our prayers

—all those things we can praise Him for. We can praise Him for

- His power
- His magnificence
- His creation

—all of those things reflect His righteousness. "...and [I] will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High."

Now, let's come to Psalm 66, and through this series on prayer, what I want you to do: I want you to learn how to pray even more effectively and more personally. In other words: The relationship and fellowship that you have with God the Father and Jesus Christ becomes a personal, intimate relationship, and we'll show you why.

Psalm 66:1: "Make a joyful noise unto God... [that is for all those who can't sing—a joyful noise, whether sharp or flat.] ...all you lands. Sing forth the honor of His name. Make His praise glorious" (vs 1-2).

Now, hold your place right here and let's come back to 2-Chronicles 5—let's see what happens when the praise is glorious. That will not happen on every occasion, but on many occasions it will. Here we have the dedication of the temple. I want you picture this: I want you to picture all the Levitical singers right there by the altar of God. I want you picture 120 of the priests with the silver trumpets, blowing on the trumpets. And then there's a little orchestra over here with all the musical instruments—whatever they had. And let's read this section:

2-Chronicles 5:11: "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the Holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course... [that means they were all there—everyone of them.] ...Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets). It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one... [singing together] ...to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals

and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, ‘For He is good; for His mercy endures forever’” (vs 11-13). Now, there’s something else that takes place. When you are inspired in that way, and this is a particular, special occasion, God is also inspired—isn’t He?

I did a sermon years ago: Can a Man Inspire God? Yes, a man can Inspire God: with his heart, his mind, his attitude—love to God. So, here God was inspired.

So much so “...that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD.... [that God showed His great presence there, right in the temple.] ...So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God” (vs 13-14). That must have been an awesome sight. I don’t even think—well, maybe today with all of the digital things they can do, maybe they can do a movie and make that look very, very powerful, indeed!

Let’s come back to Psalm 66:3: “Say unto God, ‘How [awesome] terrible are You in Your works!.... [After it says ‘make His praise glorious.’ It says terrible in the *King James* but it really means *awesome* and *fearsome* and *great*.] ...Through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You.’” Yes! And it says there in 1-Cor. 15 that Christ is going to reign until every enemy is put under His foot—which means they will be exterminated, as far as men are concerned.

And by the way, there’s a movement afoot with universal salvation—everybody’s going to be saved; even Satan. Well, that is New Age Gnosticism taken straight from Star Wars III.

Verse 4: “All the earth shall worship You, and shall sing unto Your; they shall sing to Your name. Selah.” And you see, this is going to happen when? When will all the earth do that? *In the Millennium!*

Psalm 100:1: “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all you lands.... [Again, God loves those who make joyful noises.] ...Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing.... [Notice how powerful, and if could use a modern term: *positive!* or we could use a Biblical term: *wholehearted*—that this is.] ...Know you that the LORD He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and **His Truth endures to all generations**” (vs 1-5). And the world is going to have to learn that because they are going to literally think that they are of God. And when a man

proclaims himself of God, it’s going to be an awesome thing.

“...His Truth endures to all generations.” In other words, the Bible is never outmoded. The Word of God never comes to a time that it does not apply. The Word of God is the living Word of God, the spiritual Word of God, and “endures to all generations.” Notice it says, “and come into His courts with thanksgiving”—with cheerfulness, with joy, uplifting. We can take that directly as applying to us and how we need to pray to God; and the attitude that we need to have toward Him.

Here in the New Covenant, in the New Testament, we are given this direct access to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10:16: “‘This is the covenant... [Remember, every year when we keep the Passover, we renew the New Covenant—don’t we? And we are in a *covenant relationship* with God.] ...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**... [That is the whole process of version. And that is when you listen to God. When you pray, God listens to you. That’s why you need to study the Word of God and know the Word of God and think with the Word of God.] (Now then, here’s what happens): **...and their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again**” (vs 16-17).

If God wills it and forgives it, it is gone! There is no remembrance of it! And that’s what we need to understand. That’s why prayer is so important and that’s why every day we need to ask God to forgive us our sins and forgive the sins that others have committed against us, and so forth (we’ll talk about that a little bit more).

Verse 18: “Now where remission of these *is*, it is no longer *necessary to offer* [animal] sacrifices for sin”—because the sacrifice of Christ is the ONE offering. ‘Animal’ is implied with the context of the chapter, because it starts right out here with the blood of bulls and goats in the first part of it; so this is what it’s talking about here.

Verse 19 is the key: “Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus.” That means we come into the courts, right in heaven above. We come in before the throne of God the Father and Jesus Christ at His right hand. So that’s why we are to come, as it says there in Psa. 100—we’re to come with joyfulness; we’re to enter His courts with gladness.

Verse 20: “By a new and living way... [this was not available until Christ died. This was not available until He was accepted as the sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, and in particularly for those

He is calling right now.] ...which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh)... [that's why we have a religion that has priests or has ministers that are between you and God. That is not right! ***Never have any man between you and God!*** God never intended that whatsoever.] ...and *having* a great High Priest over the house of God" (vs 20-21).

Now, is there any man who can be a greater priest than Christ? *No!* And we're going to understand, as we go through this, why then it's so important that we understand why we don't have a lot of public prayer. We'll cover that in just a little bit. Every time you go into the Bible, the longest public prayer that is recorded is the prayer of Solomon when the temple was dedicated. We'll look at some of the public prayers of Christ and we're going to see those were short! Why? *Because He understood the access He had with God the Father*—and that's what we need to understand.

Verse 22: "Let us approach *God* with a true heart... [because he will cleanse our hearts and minds] ...with full conviction of faith... [you don't have to doubt at all] ...our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience, 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 22-23).

Now then, let's come back to Matthew, the sixth chapter. We will see why Jesus gave these instructions. He gave these instructions so that we do not have religious hypocrisy or pretense. And we're going to see why He starts out this way.

Matthew 6:1: "Beware *that* you do not bestow your alms... [that is *your* service to other people] ...in the sight of men in order to be seen by them... [you just do it. You don't say, 'I wonder what people will think and I wonder what my, as it were politically today, I wonder what my poll numbers will be tomorrow.'] ...otherwise you have no reward with your Father Who *is* in heaven."

We want the true reward—don't we? Christ is going to bring the reward with Him—isn't He? *Yes!* So if you get out there and you do things just to be seen of men, you have no reward with God. Now, men might think you're great. Men might praise you; might even make it on TV. But you don't have reward of God.

Verse 2: "Therefore, when you give *your* alms, do not sound the trumpet before you... [today this is called *publicity*. It's also put in this way: Have you ever heard the modern phrase *toot your own horn*? That's where it comes from.] ...as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward.... That is men have

seen them. Every time you see a public demonstration of it by the pope. Every time you see the pope do what he has done, and men praise him, he's had his reward—right then!

Hold your place here and come to Luke 20:45, and also here is their reward: "And as all the people were listening, He said to His disciples, 'Beware of the scribes... [watch out for them] ...who like to walk in robes, and love salutations in the marketplaces... [or wherever they are] ...and *the* chief seats in the synagogues, and *the* chief places at the suppers'" (vs 45-46).

Now, when I was first being called, before I was baptized, I was attending the College of San Mateo at that time. I had considered going to Ambassador College, but it was too late in the year and I had already signed up for the University of San Francisco, which is a Catholic institution. I signed up for it before I began really seriously listening to the radio program, *The World Tomorrow*, at that time. So I figured while I would go up there, 'Well, I know it's Catholic but if I just concentrate on what's being given then I can learn the business aspect of it because it was a business thing that I was to take.

Well, I didn't know that they required all freshman to take philosophy. Now, philosophy is all the pagan philosophy. So, it got to me: here's the Catholic Church doesn't even open the Bible in philosophy class. It blew me away! It's talking all about evolution and philosophy is really all the pagan religions combined together. And I remember standing up on the third story of one of the classrooms there, looking down, and they have the little walkway going from building to building. And here are the priests with their little prayer-missal open. They can't pray a prayer from the heart, they have to have a missal. That is a book. So if they read this prayer on this day then they've done their duty. What they would do, they would walk back and forth on these sidewalks out there in the little partway between the buildings with the statue of the virgin Mary out there, and the students would come by and say, 'Good morning, father' and bow the head, bow the head.

At that time in the *Plain Truth* they had a Scripture which was talking right here in Luke 20: "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk in robes..." and I said I'm looking at with my own eyes. And every time I would go into the classroom there, I would see this crucifix with Christ hanging on it. That was really getting to me! So I endured six weeks. That's all I could take, and I knew that if I withdrew before eight weeks that it would not go against my record. But if I stay longer than eight weeks then I would have to have a grade and that

would go on my transcript and all that. I went down right then that day. When I saw that, those priests out there doing that, I said this can't be right, I can't have anything more to do with this, I'm going to go down and withdraw. So, I went down to the registrars office and here is this huge, giant picture supposedly of Christ with the crown of thorns upon his head and one big drop of blood and tears coming down his eyes. I thought, O God, I've got to get out of here! I've got to get out of here!

So when I went down to be baptized, October 19, 1960, I took another tour of the campus and I double-checked all of the classrooms to make sure that there was not a cross up at the front of that classroom. I guess I was real stern-faced about it because Paul Kroll who took me around, he thought that I wasn't interested at all. But when he showed me the classroom and I stuck my head in and I looked and said hmmm, no crucifixes. All right! 'They have their reward.'

Verse 47: "'Who devour the houses of widows, and as a pretext pray at great length.... [great, long prayers. And you can almost always—the carnal, bombastic ones I've seen even in the Church of God give opening and closing prayer, you can be sure it's going to be long; and you can be sure it's going to be bombastic; rather than from the heart, because they want to make an impression for a show that they can impress everybody.] ...These shall receive the greater judgment.'"

(go to the next track)

Now, let's come back to Matthew 6:2: "'Therefore, when you give *your* alms, do not sound the trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues... [In other words, if you do anything that you do for any other purpose than to do the will of God, you are a hypocrite. And of course, God does not want hypocrisy.] ...and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But *when* you give your alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... [in other words, to publicize it so that other people will see. Whatever you determine in your heart to do, *do!* And don't make a big deal of it, just do it quietly.] ...so that your alms may be in secret... [Now, we're going to see Him use the word *secret* here several times—and we're going to understand why.] ...and your Father Who sees in secret shall Himself reward you openly'" (vs 2-4).

Here we come to prayer, tied right in to doing religious works. Verse 5: "'And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites... [In other words, their prayers are for other purposes other than to serve God.] ...for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, in order *that* they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you,

they have their reward... [they have been seen] ...But you, when you pray, enter into a private room... [That means any place you can be alone, any quite, private place.] ...and after shutting the door... [so that no one else is listening] ...pray to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly'" (vs 5-6).

Now, why does God have you pray in secret? In other words, alone to Him?

1. So that it won't be a show before men.
2. When you get on your knees before God, does He know your heart? Know your mind? Does He know your sins? *Yes!*

So when you confess your sins to God, you can be honest—can't you? And you don't have to worry about anyone knowing. That's why confession—such as the Catholics, and other religions have, to priests is an abomination before God! Most of those confessions are not really honest because it's in the presence of another person. Now, they may admit wrongdoing, but it's not the honesty that you have when it's in secret, in private with God—between you and God alone. That's why! That takes away all hypocrisy. No flesh is going to impress God. No great, bombastic words are going to move God. A 'contrite spirit' and 'one who trembles at His Word' is what's going to do it. That's why it's in secret, and He will 'reward you openly.'

When we really understand that, that's quite a thing. That's why then it's between you and God, and as we went through there in Heb. 10, we come right before God! And Christ is right there.

"'And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*... [we covered part of that last time with the priests of Baal and Elijah. Why do they use vain repetitions? *Because mostly they're praying to idols*, and when you're praying to idols you're not praying to God.] ...for they think that by multiplying their words they shall be heard'" (v 7).

Now, the next time you're out in the car riding around see if you can (and I've done this before) change the station and if you can pick up a Catholic religious program, you've got the whole congregation there: 'Hail Mary, mother of God, blessed be the fruit of your womb—Jesus.' And they go over and over and over and over it. It doesn't go to God. God does not care. That's not the kind of prayer that God wants. And they do it with what? *With rosaries and beads and crucifixes and before statues, and before idols*—they become superstitious. And then they have the threat that if you are not in the Catholic Church you have no salvation. Well, when that comes they can do that.

Hold your place here in Matt. 6 and let's go Psalm 135:13—here's a very interesting concerning idolatry—notice the difference here: “Your name, O LORD, endures forever; and Your memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants.... [notice the comparison, the difference]: ...The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusts in them” (vs 13-18). That's why they have to use vain repetitions.

All religions of the world are that way. Now, some of the Protestants are not that way. But I believe that Protestantism is the ‘carnal Christianity’ of Israel. And it serves a purpose for the society. But that has nothing to do with salvation. When you get into the heathen religions, that's what they do. The Indians, they do this: Many of you may have seen the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It talks about getting in contact with aliens. It starts out showing all these Indians out there enmasse, and they're all in the praying, lotus position. They are all saying ‘ohmmmmm, ohmmmmm, ohmmmmm over and over again. And that's the theme of the whole movie. You'd be crazy, too, if that's all you ever heard or do. They have to do that because they are not dealing with God. They are dealing with idols and with demons.

Let's come to Isaiah 40 concerning repetition in prayers and idols. It's amazing, absolutely amazing! Let's always remember this: ***You cannot accomplish spiritual things with physical means!*** The spiritual things are:

- conversion
- having God's laws written in your heart and mind
- developing the mind of Christ
- growing in grace and knowledge and truth
- having the fruits of the Spirit:
 - ✓ love
 - ✓ joy
 - ✓ hope
 - ✓ peace
 - ✓ longsuffering
 - ✓ temperance
 - ✓ kindness
 - ✓ goodness
 - ✓ meekness

—those are accomplished through the Spirit of God. Physical things such as a cross or a crucifix, or prayer beads, or an idol can never accomplish a spiritual thing.

Let's compare—which Isaiah is doing here—God with the idols. Isaiah 40:12: “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” The God we worship and pray to has made everything that there is!

Notice, if men are so smart with their religions: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counselor has taught him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?... [not a single being on earth] ...Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering” (vs 13-16). So, all the physical things.

Now, notice v 18: “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare unto Him?... [That's why Christ came in the flesh. ‘If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father,’ He said.] ...The workman melts a graven image... [all this expensive gold. Look how hard they work to get the gold—melt it down and purify it.] ...and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold... [Gold is awesome and breathtaking.] ...and casts silver chains” (vs 18-19).

I saw on the Discovery Channel these silly Hindu, in the Temple of Rats—they have temples to rats—and they feed them and they let them crawl all over them—and that's god! How stupid and foolish of human beings to consider that God is a rat. No wonder they're in blindness and emptiness, and sickness and disease, and poverty and curses. *Who are you going to compare to God!*

Verse 20: “He that is so impoverished... [In other words, has no gold, has no silver. The naked natives in New Guinea and South America and Africa and Australia.] ...that he has no oblation chooses a tree that will not rot... [What do they have? They carve the gods out of wood like the Indians in North America—totem poles.] He's clever, he gets one): ...that will not rot... [Big deal!] ...he seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.” Isn't that something? It says in another place that with the residue left over he burns the ashes to warm himself. He burns the chips that are left over and warms himself, yet, he takes the stalk and bows down to it and says, ‘this is my god.’

Verse 21: “‘Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: That brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. **To whom then will you liken Me, or shall I be equal?**” says the Holy One.” (vs 21-25). If you want to look at something that has been made, ***look at what God has made!*** That’s what He’s saying here.

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who has created these things... [That’s the One we worship!] ...that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power...” (v 26)—that’s something! I tell you!

Let’s come back here to Matthew, the sixth chapter. That’s why Christ says ‘do not use vain repetition.’ We’ll talk about being persistent, later on, when you have prayers that you need to pray and consistently pray, seeking an answer. That’s not a ‘vain repetition’; that’s being persistent. There is a difference!

Matthew 6:8: “Now then, do not be like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.” Someone is surely going to say, ‘Well, if God knows we have need, why should we ask?’ *Because He wants you to understand and know that everything comes from God—and He will give it; He will do it.*

Before we get into the model prayer here—vs 9-15—let’s look at some other things. Let’s first see how Christ prayed in a ‘private place.’

Matthew 14:13: “Now after hearing *this...* [the death of John the Baptist] ...Jesus departed from there by ship into a wilderness place apart. But when the multitudes heard *that He had left*, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And after going out, Jesus saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion toward them, and healed their sick. Now when evening was approaching, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘*This* place is a wilderness, and the time *to eat* has already passed; dismiss the multitude so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them *something* to eat.’ But they said to Him, ‘We do not have *anything* here except five loaves and

two fish.’ And He said to them, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ And He commanded the multitude to sit on the grass.... [This prayer is so short that nothing of it is recorded.] ...Then He took the five loaves and the two fish; *and* looking up into heaven, He blessed *them*; and He broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that were left” (vs 13-20). So this tells us exactly, the public prayer. In other words this also tells us this, too: If we believe as Jesus believed, God can make anything take place. Now, let’s see what happened:

Verse 22: “And immediately Jesus compelled His disciples to enter the ship and go before Him to the other side, while He dismissed the multitude. And after dismissing the multitude, He went up into the mountain apart to pray... [Here He was praying outside, alone—any place alone!] ...and when evening came, He was there alone” (vs 22-23). And, of course, when He came, He walked on the water and so forth.

Let’s come to Luke 5:16—here’s a good example; get away. Sometimes you just need to get away all by yourself and just pray to God. God knows, He understands! “Then He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.” That’s what we need to do. Go to some quiet, private place. Since He was not at home and He was traveling all the time, that’s why He went into some place alone and in the wilderness and then He prayed.

Isn’t it interesting that the longest prayer that we have recorded is the one that John wrote in John 17—and we’ll analyze that because that’s the ***true*** Lord’s Prayer.

Luke 9:18: “Now it came to pass as He was praying alone, and the twelve disciples were with Him... [they were close at hand] ...*that* He questioned them, saying, ‘Whom do the multitudes declare Me to be?’” Then you have the whole thing here that He was the Son of man. But again, He was praying and the disciples were close by.

Luke 22:39—this is when He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and was just before He was to be arrested. “Then He left *the house and* went, as He was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He arrived at the place... [Apparently a special place on the Mt. of Olives, that when He was there that’s where He prayed.] ...He said to them, ‘Pray *that you* do not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw... [They were far enough away that they really couldn’t hear the words.] ...and falling to *His* knees, He prayed...” (vs 39-41). What we have here, we’ll see that

- it's okay to stand while you're praying
- it's okay to kneel while you're praying
- it's okay to raise your arms while you're praying

—but obviously not in a show before men. And I can't help but think of how many of these Protestant churches do now. They have a 'praise time' where all they do is sing hymn after hymn and they rock back and forth and raise their hands in the air, and all this. That is all show. And when they are done with that service *they have had their reward!* They may go home feeling good. They may have had an uplifting, emotional experience. But that's as far as it goes.

He withdrew Himself and He kneeled and prayed: "...saying, 'Father, if You are willing to take away this cup from Me—... [It wasn't that Christ was ready to back-down from it; it's just that He understood the magnitude of what was going to happen—that's what it was!] ...nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done'" (v 42).

Let me just add here concerning the will of God: God does not want you to be without will. God does not want you to be a mindless robot. He gave you a mind, and He gave you the capacity to choose. He wants us then not to abrogate our will. Not to get rid of our will, such as the cadaver oath of the Jesuits. For they say that they will have *no will* of their own, they will obey their superior in everything. That if the superior says black is white, it is so. That if white is black, it is so. **God does not want that kind of thing!** That's why that kind of thing is a cult!

What does God want, then? **He wants you to choose to make your will the will of God**—that's what He wants. In other words, you have a greater *will* than your own human nature *will*. Your *will* then—because of choice, because of living, because of God's Holy Spirit—is going to be the *will* of God, and that is the ultimate of coming to the mind of Christ. So that's when we say, 'Not my will be done, but Your will be done.' And after all, when we understand the depths of the 'law of sin and death' that we all have in us, and the lust that is within our members, and that *our will* is going to serve the self—why would we want *our will* anyway? Why not let *our will* take the thought and use it to produce the *will of God* through His Spirit and through His Word. So, the prayers then have to be according to God's will.

Now, let's look at a public prayer. Let's come to Matthew 11—here's a public prayer of Christ that's recorded; they all heard it, and it was recorded and put in the Scriptures for us, so we can just get the comparison. Lots of times it's just good

to read and understand more Scriptures so we get the comparison.

Matthew 11:20 "Then He began to castigate the cities in which most of His miracles had taken place, because they did not repent... [Which means they didn't believe. Had they really believed they would have repented.] ...'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that have taken place in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the* day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who have been exalted to heaven... [that is because of Christ being there and the disciples being there and teaching in the synagogues; and all the healings and everything that was done in Capernaum.] ...shall be cast down to the grave. For if the miracles that have taken place in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment than for you'" (vs 20-24).

Now the comparison between what it is with those people who were rejecting the Word of God, rejecting the mighty works that were done and not believing.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him'" (vs 25-27). Notice vs 25-27—a very short prayer. And what was it for.

- He was thanking God for the disciples, who later became apostles.
- He was thanking God for His wisdom in choosing them instead of the wise and prudent.
- He was comparing that to the hard-hearted attitude that these people had toward Jesus Christ and His words.

So that's why a 'humble heart and a contrite spirit' inspire God.

Now, let's look at another prayer. Let's go to John 11—this one is a short prayer, a real short prayer. And the purpose was so that the people would understand that Jesus Christ had direct connection with God. This is in the account of raising Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:32: "Then Mary, when she came

where Jesus was *and* saw Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’.... [they really didn’t need His physical presence being there; but she was looking to His physical presence—‘if You’d been here, you’d taken care of him’] ...As a result, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in spirit and was Himself inwardly moved. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept.... [shortest verse in the whole Bible] ...Then the Jews said, ‘See how much He loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not this man, Who had the power to open the eyes of the blind, also have caused this one not to die?’” (vs 32-37).

Now, here’s another good example. What are these people talking about here in relationship to Christ? *They’re talking about their desire—correct? Their will—correct? Yes!* But it was God’s will, Christ’s will, that Lazarus die to show the glory of God.

“Because of this, Jesus again groaned within Himself *as* He came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over the opening. Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him who had died, said to Him, ‘Lord, he already stinks, for it has been four days.’.... [It doesn’t matter the condition—does it? I mean, read the whole account of the Valley of Dry Bones. They’re way beyond stinking; just dry bones left.] ...Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you will believe, you shall see the glory of God?’ Then they removed the stone *from the tomb* where the dead man had been laid. And Jesus lifted *His* eyes upward and said... [Now, let’s time this prayer.] ... ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always; but because of the people who stand around I say *this*, so that they may believe that You did send Me’” (vs 38-42)—14-15 seconds!

Did God answer that 14-second prayer? *Yes!* Jesus was standing—wasn’t He? *Yes!* This is not to say that we are to make every public prayer 14 seconds. But, in other words, public prayer in the New Testament is really very short. That’s why He condemned long prayers. Can you imagine what it would have been if the priest of Baal would have been there to try and get Lazarus resurrected from the dead? It would have been shouting and screaming all day and cutting and gnashing themselves. Notice the difference. When you’re dealing with the real God, you’re dealing with the true God. He will answer!

Verse 43: “And after He had spoken these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’” Three words, that’s all it takes to raise the dead—right? Boy, I tell you, you go through these

things and you think: My have we not been faithless in so many things? Have we not been unbelieving in so many things? That’s why it’s important to study the Word of God—to help you grow in faith, belief and understanding.

Verse 44: “And he who had been dead came forth, his feet and hands bound with grave clothes, and his face bound up with a napkin. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him and let *him* go.’” Now also, this tells you something about grave-clothes (just in passing here). He was not wrapped in a shroud—was he? How was he buried? No one went in to assist him—did they? Christ just said, ‘Come forth.’ And he walked out. This tells us that he was wrapped much like we understand mummies are wrapped. And that’s how Jesus was wrapped. That’s why he [Lazarus] came out bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. So they were still tied on him. He came walking out like the old movie they had years ago, *The Invisible Man*—the only time you could ever see him was when he was wrapped. So here, Lazarus comes walking out, still wrapped in the grave-clothes. Quite different from a shroud.

Suffice it to say, all public prayers are to be short private prayers:

- you can be standing
- you can be sitting
- you can be kneeling
- you can have your face to the floor
- you can be prostrate

—because it is the prayer and it is the faith—it is not the position.

The Hindus believe—and most religions have this: you put your hands together in a prayer-type position and—even the Buddhists do this; when they meet each other they put their hands together and they bow down. The reason they bow down is because they’re bowing to the god in that person, because that person is a god and every person is a god. That’s why Deepak Chopra says ‘to know god, look in the mirror, you’re looking at him.’ It’s not the position. You don’t have to have your hands in any particular way.

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) Psalm 9:1-2
- 2) Psalm 54:1-7
- 3) Psalm 56:4, 1-2, 5-7
- 4) Psalm 109:30-31
- 5) Psalm 132:1-6
- 6) Psalm 7:17
- 7) Psalm 66:1-2
- 8) 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

- 9) Psalm 66:3-4
- 10) Psalm 100:1-5
- 11) Hebrews 10:16-23
- 12) Matthew 6:1-2
- 13) Luke 20:45-47
- 14) Matthew 6:2-7
- 15) Psalm 135:13-18
- 16) Isaiah 40:12-16, 18-26
- 17) Matthew 6:8
- 18) Matthew 14:13-20, 22-23
- 19) Luke 5:16
- 20) Luke 9:18
- 21) Luke 22:39-42
- 22) Matthew 11:20-27
- 23) John 11:32-44

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 5, 10
- 1 Corinthians 15
- John 17

Also referenced: Sermon: *Can A Man Inspire God?*

FRC:bo
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