THE THREE TYPES OF PRAYER



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Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever.
I John2:15-17

I. PRIVATE PRAYER

A. Matthew 6:5-6

Perhaps the best, single passage concerning private prayer is Matthew 6:5-6: *And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your inner chamber, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall recompense you.*

In dealing with private prayer, Yeshua (Jesus) made two points.

1. Hypocritical Prayer

The first point is hypocritical praying. He says that when you pray you will not do as the hypocrites do according to verse 5. And what do the hypocrites do?

they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and [they love to pray and stand] in the corners of the streets.

And for what purpose? To communicate with God? No, but to be seen of men. Since their purpose was to be seen of men, Jesus said: *Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.* Their reward is nothing more than having been seen of men. If that is the attitude by which they enter into prayer, then that is all the reward they are going to get; that is all they will receive as answer to their prayer.

2. Proper Prayer

Second in verse 6, Yeshua then went on to discuss proper prayer: [but you, when you pray], *enter into* [your] *inner chamber, shut* [your] *door and pray to* [your] *Father who is in secret and* [the] *Father who* [sees all secret things will be able to reward your prayers accordingly]. As we shall see, this is not saying anything against public prayer. What this verse

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is teaching against is "showiness" in prayer; using prayer to display religiosity; using prayer to show off oratory skills. The issue is that of motivation, not that of manner.

Concerning proper prayer, the word *when* emphasizes regularity. There should be regular periods of prayer. The word *enter* emphasizes a single act of private prayer. The emphasis of this passage is physical seclusion so that you can really concentrate upon the Lord in your prayer life.

B. The Basis of Prayer

The second thing about private prayers is that prayer rests upon explicit commands. We should be willing to pray because prayers do rest upon explicit commands and promises of Scripture (Mat. 6:12; Jas. 1:15; I Jn. 1:9). Because prayers do rest upon explicit commands and promises of Scripture, we should be praying regularly in private prayer.

C. Harmony With the Word of God

Third, we should pray in harmony with the Word of God in its intent but specific, guaranteed requests have no basis in Scripture. In other words, we should not enter into our private prayer expecting that God is obligated to answer requests exactly as we want Him to. This is contrary to Scripture. Matthew 6:11 and 26-34 does guarantee our daily needs, but there are no specifics. God will decide exactly how to meet our needs. We can rely on Him to meet those needs; but let God be God in the manner by which He does it; that is proper praying.

In Romans 1:9-10, there was no guarantee that Paul's specific request to be able to come to Rome would be answered. Later, it was answered and Paul did make it to Rome; but as a prisoner and not as a free agent.

James 4:15 says: *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.*
Because we do not have a promise from God that He will answer every specific request we make, we should apply James 4:15 and say: *If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that*. Proper praying includes confidence that God will accomplish His purpose in wisdom and love but it does not mean that our specific request is guaranteed. We do need to express our real desires and feelings to God as David did in Psalm 51. We should be conscious at the same time of God's displeasure (Ps. 38:3). This shows that we should be praying in harmony with the Word of God in its intent, but do not demand that a prayer be answered on the basis of the way you want it answered. Let God answer His prayer the way He knows best.

D. Prayer on the Basis of Scripture

The fourth thing about private prayer is to pray on the basis of

Scripture (Jas. 4:2-3). In verse 2, James said: [you] *have not because,* [you] *ask not.* Sometimes we do not receive things from the Lord simply because we do not ask these things of the Lord. But sometimes we do ask and still do not receive *because* [we] *ask amiss* (v. 3). If you pray expecting and demanding God to answer your prayer in a specific way, then that is asking *amiss*. Sometimes we do not get our prayers answered because we do not ask to begin with; but, sometimes we do not have our prayers answered because we ask in a wrong manner, in a wrong way.

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E. Prayers of Anger and Complaint

The fifth thing about private prayer is that prayers of anger and complaints are not improper. It is perfectly alright for you to take your complaints, your gripes, to the Lord. Job did this in Job 10:1-7.

And in Job 21:15, Job complained: *what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?*

Clearly, the Bible allows us to pray to God and issue our prayers of complaints. If you read through the Book of Jeremiah, you will see that Jeremiah prayed a number of times. A good number of his prayers are prayers of complaints, prayers of dissatisfaction. He was unhappy with things as they were.

F. Examples of Private Prayer

Sixth, there are a number of examples of private prayer. These are all in the Book of Psalms: Psalm 17:1-15; 72:20; 86:1-17; 90:1-17; 102:1 -28; 109:4; and 142:1-7. Each of these has a superscription, which clearly states that these are private, individual prayers.

Summary: One type of praying is private praying. The Bible encourages us to do private praying with the emphasis being against hypocritical prayer and in favor of solitude, seclusion, and the going away from all distractions so that we can give ourselves over to the Lord for a time of prayer.

II. PUBLIC PRAYER

When the Bible emphasizes private prayer, it does not intend to exclude public prayer. The Bible also teaches public prayer. We have seven specific examples of this in the Book of Acts.

A. Acts 1:14

These all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

There are three things about public prayer in this passage. First, there was an attitude: they all shared; they were *all with one accord*. They all agreed in their prayer life and issues. Second, the action: they *continued steadfastly* [in prayer meetings] on a number of occasions. Third, the inclusions: it included the eleven apostles and it included women, so

this was a co-ed prayer meeting. It included: Mary the mother of Jesus and it included: his brethren, the four half-brothers of Yeshua who became believers somewhere between His death and Acts 1.

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B. Acts 4:23-31

The second passage is Acts 4:23-31: *And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, you that did make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant, did say, Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed: for of a truth in this city against your holy Servant Jesus, whom you did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever your hand and your council foreordained to come to pass. And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

This passage also points out three things.

1. The Background

First, verse 23 gives us the background. It was after they were released from prison and it was after they were ordered by the rulers to cease preaching.

2. The Group Prayer

Second, the group prayer is in verse 24a. It was a group praise in response to the report of verse 23. In the prayer, *they lifted up their voice*; it was a vocal group prayer; they prayed verbally, out loud. The attitude was that of *one accord*; they agreed in prayer.

3. The Content

Third, in verses 24b-30 is the prayer content. Here, let me point out several things.

First is the addressee: God the Father: *O Lord.*

They prayed to God the Father to whom all prayers are to be addressed.

They then hallowed God's name by saying: *you that did make the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is.*

By hallowing God's name, they called to mind the majesty and the power of God to whom they were praying. If this God is responsible for the Creation, He can certainly answer their requests. This is an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God.

In verse 25a, the prayer speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in the

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prophetic Word, who had spoken in the Old Testament through David.

Then in verses 25b-26, they quote Psalm 2:1-2. They quote it not as a fulfillment, because that did not happen in Acts 4, but as an application in verses 27-28.

Having acknowledged the sovereignty of God, they then make some specific requests. They remind God of the background in verse 29a: *And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings.*
By saying this, they state the problem.

Having stated the problem, they make the request in verse 29b: *grant unto your servants to speak your word with all boldness.*
The request that they make in this public prayer was for spiritual boldness in preaching the gospel in the face of official opposition.

They then pray for certain accompaniments to the boldness in verse 30: *while you stretch forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.*
They closed their prayer in the name of Yeshua.

4. The Prayer Answered

In the end the prayer is answered in verse 31, by a supernatural display of power because: *the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together.*
The specific answer was that: *they were* [once again] *all filled with the Holy Spirit*. The filling of the Spirit, in this case, gave them *boldness* [to speak] *the word of God* in answer to their own prayer.

C. Acts 12:5, 12-17

The third passage on prayer is Acts 12:5 and 12-17.
Verse 5 states the purpose of this group prayer: *Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.*
The purpose of the group prayer meeting was to pray for Peter who was now in prison under the threat of execution. The church was asking earnest prayer to God on his behalf. The group specifically was the Church of Jerusalem. They wished to identify themselves totally with Peter. They addressed their prayers to God the Father.

The answer to their prayer is found in verses 12-17. The prayer meeting was in a private home: *the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark*, the author of the Gospel of Mark (v. 12). At that point, Peter arrived. His arrival showed that their prayer was answered (vv. 13-17). They were praying with the expectation of answered prayer, but it was not answered in the way that they thought it would be.

D. Acts 16:25

The fourth example of public prayer is Acts 16:25: *But about midnight*

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Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying. Part of their prayer included: *singing hymns unto God and* [their fellow-prisoners] *were listening to them*. Here, the group prayer consisted only of two people: Paul and Silas. It was vocal because all the other prisoners could hear them both praying and singing. The cause of this group prayer was persecution for the faith. They addressed their prayers to God the Father. In this case the public audience before whom they prayed were all unbelievers.

E. Acts 20:36

The fifth example of public prayer is Acts 20:36: *he kneeled down and prayed with them all.*

In this case, the group consisted of Paul and elders of the Church of Ephesus. They had followed Paul's admonitions and warnings in the past and now he prays that they will continue following them in the future as well.

F. Acts 21:5

The sixth example of public prayer is Acts 21:5: *they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed.*

In this case, the group consisted of whole families. It was a prayer of farewell. It was a prayer concerning Paul's safety for his journey to Jerusalem.

G. Acts 27:35

The seventh example of public prayer is Acts 27:35: *And when he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all.*

Here the public prayer was prayer as a blessing over the meal. The addressee was God the Father and the audience included both believers and unbelievers.

These are the seven examples of public prayer in the Book of Acts, showing that God approves of both types of prayers: private and public.

H. "The Ten Most Unwanted Public Prayers"

I have read an article called, "The Ten Most Unwanted Public Prayer Habits" by Leroy Patterson (Eternity). I would like to share these ten things because I think they are important in public praying and Leroy Patterson has expressed it well.

First, avoid the Solemn Assembly Prayer by which the one praying changes into a deep voice, and says "Gawd" instead of "God."

Second, avoid the Cliché Camouflage; the use of clichés to camouflage a lack of preparations; such as, "we bow our hearts,"

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"bless each one of us," "hide your servant behind the cross," "glorify your name," "may our hearts be set on fire." These are clichés, which are really meaningless.

A third thing to avoid is the Prayer of Just in which we use the term "just" in a monotonous way; such as, "just bless us today," "just be with us," "as we just worship you," "just bless the sick."

A fourth thing to avoid is the Holy Promotion Prayer; a prayer used to raise support for a pet project; such as, "as we look around we are reminded of the need to expand our facilities," or a prayer used to announce a coming attraction such as, "Lord, as our guest evangelist begins a revival series tonight, may each one of us be convicted to bring our unsaved friends."

The fifth thing to avoid is the Lecture Prayer where the pastor is not only praying, but is using the prayer time to give a lecture to his congregation.

The sixth thing to avoid is the Father Prayer in which the term "Father" is overused.

The seventh thing to avoid is the You Know Syndrome which is a prayer that keeps reminding God of what He knows: "You know our hearts," "You know the situation on the mission field," "You know the needs of our missionaries," "You know brother Jones is in the hospital"; we do not have to keep telling God what He knows.

The eighth thing to avoid in public praying is the Round-the-World Prayer, which is a prayer by a person who feels compelled to pray for everything when asked to pray for only one thing. So when you are asked to thank God for the food, just thank Him for the food. Do not start praying "around-the-world" in preparation for the one prayer request.

The ninth prayer to avoid is the Payment-on-Demand Prayer which claims every promise in the Bible regardless to whom it was made and demanding God to answer exactly as it is requested leaving God no room to maneuver.

The tenth thing to avoid in public prayer is the In Conclusion Prayer, the summary prayer, by which one feels compelled to summarize the message he has just preached and even reiterates the same three points.

III. ESCHATOLOGICAL PRAYERS

These are prayers concerning future things that have been promised. We will discuss eschatological prayer in four specific areas.

A. Concerning the Rapture

The first thing concerns the Rapture. We are to pray concerning the Rapture according to Luke 21:36: *But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*

The means of escaping these terrible things is by means of the Rapture. When Jesus said: *all these things that shall come to pass* in the context of Luke 21:36, the *all these things* had to do with the Great Tribulation. We should be watching and praying that we might be able to escape these terrible things that will come to pass; to escape the Great Tribulation by means of the Rapture and to stand before the Son of Man. We will stand before the Son of Man after the Rapture at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah. We do not escape by praying. If you are a believer you will automatically escape the Tribulation. The emphasis here is on praying for the Rapture to occur because, by means of the Rapture, we will prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

B. Concerning the Great Tribulation

A second eschatological prayer concerns prayer in relationship to the Great Tribulation found in Matthew 24:20 and Mark 13:18. It is a prayer concerning Israel's flight; Israel will flee the Land in the middle of the Tribulation. The believers in the first half of the Tribulation are to pray that when they must flee, it will not happen on one of two occasions: *pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on a sabbath.*

Believers in the Tribulation will be praying this eschatological prayer. While we should be praying now for the Rapture to come soon, we do not need to pray now that Israel's flight will not happen either on a Sabbath Day or in winter. But once the Tribulation starts, then this is the prayer that the Tribulation saints should pray.

C. Concerning the Second Coming

The third thing about eschatological prayer concerns the Second Coming in Mark 13:33: *watch and pray*. Specifically in that context, the *watch* and the *pray* is for the Second Coming. This, too, will be a prayer of believers before the Second Coming.

D. Concerning the Kingdom

The fourth thing about eschatological prayer concerns the Kingdom. There are three things concerning eschatological prayer in relationship to the Kingdom. First, the Messiah will be the object of prayer continually (Ps. 72:15). The Messiah will be visibly present on this earth and so will be the object of prayer continually throughout the 1,000 years of the Kingdom. Second, the Millennial Temple will be a *house of prayer for all peoples.* Whereas under the Mosaic Law, the Temple was a house of prayer for Jews only, in the Millennium, the Temple will be *a house of prayer for all peoples* (Is. 56:7; Mat. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46). Third, in the Kingdom, Gentiles will be coming to Jerusalem on a regular basis to pray; to entreat the favor of the Lord (Zech. 8:21-22).✡

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IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS144, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, and 151.