

SHOULD WE PRAY IN PUBLIC?

- *By Pastor Greg Hooker*

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matthew 6:5).

Like the Pharisee's of Jesus' day, the Lord warns us about doing things 'just to be seen of man'. Perhaps one reason why Jesus disliked this form of hypocritical prayer is because of its origin; it was born of the sin of 'pride'. The main reason these men prayed in the most congregated areas of town were to parade their pride, and in essence were saying, 'look at men! I am holier than you are.'

Jesus strongly condemns this type of 'praying' because it was not directed toward God, but to themselves. Instead of worshiping and communing with the Lord, they were worshiping themselves and the pride living within their hearts.

Furthermore, pride (if you can label sins worse than others) is the original sin of Lucifer that led to his expulsion from the splendors of Heaven and the position of lead angel. The Bible tells us that Lucifer was "lifted up with pride, and said, I will ascend to the mount of God". In other words, Lucifer was so enamored with pride, it resulted in a revolt against His Creator.

Thus, the Pharisees in our story were simply 'lifted with pride'; making a public display of themselves for others to see. Rather than worshiping God through the highest form of praise, they were simply and pridefully proclaiming to the passersby, 'Look at me. See how great I am? I'm willing to pray in the streets rather than enter a secret place to meet and commune with the Lord.'

To this Jesus gravely warned, "They have their reward" - a fruitless, meaningless, and worthless display to others resulting in an 'earthly' reward that will not be rewarded with an eternal reward in Heaven.. Let us all heed the instructions of our Lord to 'enter a secret place' to pour out our heart and soul.

One last thought, Jesus is not condemning public prayer per say, but the pride that is associated with it. God puts down the proud, but raises up the humble. Remember, man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart - the very intent of man. He knows who is making a public speck-table of themselves and who isn't.

Dear Father, if there is one sin that you hate the most, it must be that of pride. Pride destroyed Lucifer and countless angels, and it will destroy us, too. Give us wisdom in this area that we be not guilty of such a rebellious act against a holy and pure God who demands and deserves our utmost attention in all things - especially in the work of prayer. In Jesus name, Pastor Greg.