

# **LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES**

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## **When It's Time To Quit Praying**

1Thessalonians 5:17

Our text specifically says that we are to "pray without ceasing." Prayer is without doubt a wonderful privilege of the Christian, and affords a powerful advantage in times of trouble and distress. But the bible also teaches that there are some situations in which people should stop praying. i.e. praying will do no good.

### **I. The Alien Sinner Should Quit Praying For Salvation.**

The bible does not teach that alien sinners cannot pray, but that they are not saved by prayer. Acts 9:10-11 "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias and to him said the lord in a vision, Ananias, And he said, behold I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth," Saul fasted and prayed for three days, but was still not saved.

Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou arise be baptized and wash away thy sins." When he so acted, his sins were forgiven.

Acts 10:1-4 we read about Cornelius. Even though Cornelius was a praying man, he was not saved by prayer. He was instructed to send for Peter "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Acts 11:14 Cornelius was saved by "words" i.e. obedience to the word of God. In v.48 he was commanded to be baptized.

The "mourners bench" type of religion is therefore wrong. People who are not Christians cannot pray away their sins. "Calling on the name of the Lord" Rom.10:13-17 is not:

1. Believing on Christ, because one believes before he "calls."

2. Praying to God because both Saul and Cornelius prayed but were not saved by prayer.

A person is saved when he obeys the words of the Lord. Mt.7:21 "Not everyone who saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father in heaven." Rom. 6:3-5 "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ..." In verses 17, 18 we read "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you, being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." To pray for salvation will do no good. We must obey the word of God.

### **II. People Should Quit Praying For The Kingdom To Come.**

When Jesus gave the model prayer in Mt.6:10, the kingdom had not come. However the kingdom was to come during the lifetime of some who heard him preach Mark 9:1 "Some of you standing here shall not taste of death until you see the kingdom come with power." The kingdom was established in the first century. We read in Col. 1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

Rev. 1:9 "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom..." To pray for the kingdom to come is out of order, since the kingdom has already come.

### III. The Persistent Sinner Should Quit Praying.

The statement "God heareth not sinners" in John 9:31 refers to persistent sinners who reject, deny, and turn their back on the will of God.

1. The Pharisees were not challenging the lineage of Jesus, but asserting that he was a violator of God's law.
2. The man who had been born blind knew that this was inconsistent with God's word. Prov.28:9 "One who turns his ear from hearing the hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Psa. 66:18 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."
3. Jesus, could not have performed miracles by the power of God if he had been the kind of Jew that the Pharisees accused him of being. God today will not hear the unrepentant child. Heb. 10:26 "If we sin willfully... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

Sad to go into a hospital room where unfaithful Christians are present who could not pray to God for their sick mother or father. All because they are continuing to live a life of sin. If a child of God is living in willful disobedience to God, he may as well quit praying God will not listen to the person who will not listen to Him.

### IV. The Unforgiving Should Stop Praying.

Jesus taught that the one who offends and the one who is offended both have responsibilities. Mt.5:23-24 "If thou therefore bring thy gift to the altar and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, go and first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift." I have a duty to go to anyone who has something against me and try to resolve the issue. To keep it to myself or tell it to others is wrong. Even if I feel the individual is "hard to approach" that is no excuse. Mt. 18:15-17 "If thy brother sin against thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone..." Note the procedure (1) go to him (2) if he fails to listen, then take two or three with you. If he won't listen to them, (3) then take it to the church. Often we reverse the order and lose the brother.

Mt.6:12-15 "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." To fail to forgive is to destroy the bridge over which we all must pass in order to be forgiven by God. A person whose heart is filled with hatred and who will not forgive his brother, may as well quit praying for God's forgiveness.

### V. The Hypocritical Church Member Should Quit Praying.

Mt. 6:5-8 (Read)

The Lord mentions three things typical of hypocritical prayers that should be avoided:

1. "to be seen of men" These private personal prayers were paraded before men so as to be seen of them.

They actually sought out conspicuous places to pray so that others would witness their prayers. Their motive was wrong. They had their reward. They were guilty of displaying a false piety.

2. "vain repetitions" What makes a prayer vain? The word means "to stammer, stutter, then to babble or prate, to repeat the same formula many times as did the worshipers of Baal and Diana of Ephesus." Such vain repetitions impeached the wisdom and goodness of God and was therefore forbidden. The heathen did not have the true motive in prayer, the hypocrite hides his motives. The disciple of Christ must avoid such chattering, prating, and running off mere words in prayer.

3. "much speaking" This not only condemns rote, repetitious prayers, but also limits the amount of speaking in prayer. How often this divine injunction is violated, and sometime by the very best of people. Classic examples: Cardinal Cushing at Kennedy's inauguration. Prayed for 17 minutes and 30 seconds. Aimie Semple McPherson at Democratic convention that nominated F.D.R. prayed for 31 minutes and 10 seconds. This caused Will Rogers to remark "I didn't know anybody could think up that much to impress the Lord in favor of a Democrat." That remark touched off a full-fledged demonstration. People who pray thusly, should quit praying.

#### VI. Acceptable Prayer.

1. We must pray in faith. James 1:6-7 "But let him ask in faith nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

2. We must pray God's will be done. 1John 5:14 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." We can pray in faith, and at the same time know that God knows best. Somet thing's we may not need, we must seek his will.

3. We pray through Jesus. 1Tim.2:5 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

4. We are to pray for:

1. Rulers---1Tim. 2:1-2 "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

2. Our brethren---James 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another..." Phil. 1:9-10 "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ;"

3. The lost---Rom. 10:1 "Brethren my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." In Feb. 1861, a terrible gale raged along the coast of England. In the bay of Hartlepoole it wrecked eighty one vessels. While the storm was at its height, the Rising Sun, a strong ship, struck a rock and sank.

The life-boats were away rescuing other wrecked crews. The only means of rescuing any survivors was the rocket apparatus. The rocket was fired and the life line went out. As they retrieved it, they drug on shore what appeared to be the lifeless body of a boy sailor. Tender hands worked and in a short time he became conscious. Looking around he asked "where am I?" "you are safe lad" came the reply. "Where's the captain?" "drowned, my lad." "The mate then?" "He's drowned too." "The crew, then?" "They are all lost, my lad. Only you are saved."

The boy was overwhelmed for a few moments, and then he raised both hands and cried in a loud voice "my mother's been praying for me" he then dropped to his knees in the wet sand and put his sobbing face in his hands.

4. The sick and material necessities. 3John 2 "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth." (re Gaius)  
Mt. 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread"

5. Our enemies Mt.5:44 "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

6. Forgiveness Acts 8:22 "Repent and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Mt.6:12 "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Can you address God as your spiritual Father? (Gal.3:26-27 "for we are all the children by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Are you on speaking terms with God? Do you pray as you should. Will God hear your prayers?