

Matthew 6:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus condemns the hypocrites who 'love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.' Public prayer itself is not wrong (Jesus prayed publicly), but the motive of self-display is condemned. The Greek 'phileo' (love) indicates they delighted in conspicuous piety. Standing was a normal prayer posture, but choosing visible locations revealed pride. Their prayer was not communion with God but performance for human admiration.

Historical Context

Jewish custom required prayer three times daily (morning, afternoon, evening). Pharisees would time their travel to be in prominent public locations at prayer times, ensuring maximum visibility. The synagogue and street corners were high-traffic areas where pious displays gained most recognition.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can public prayer be offered genuinely versus being performed for human admiration?
2. What heart motivations should you examine before participating in public prayer or worship?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ὅταν προσεύχεσθαι οὐκ ἔση ὥσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταί,
And when thou prayest not be as the hypocrites
G2532 G3752 G4336 G3756 G2071 G5618 G3588 G5273

ὅτι φιλοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς
are for they love in the synagogues And in
G3754 G5368 G1722 G4864 G2532 G1722 G3588

γωνίαις τῶν πλατειῶν ἐστῶτες προσεύχεσθαι ὅπως
the corners of the streets standing thou prayest that
G1137 G3588 G4113 G2476 G4336 G3704

ἂν φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι
they may be seen of men Verily I say unto you are for
G302 G5316 G3588 G444 G281 G3004 G5213 G3754

ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν
They have reward
G568 G3588 G3408 G846

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 6:2 (Parallel theme): Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Luke 18:13 (Parallel theme): And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Mark 11:25 (Prayer): And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Isaiah 1:15 (Prayer): And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Jeremiah 29:12 (Prayer): Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

Luke 20:47 (Prayer): Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Luke 18:1 (Prayer): And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

James 4:6 (Parallel theme): But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Ephesians 6:18 (Prayer): Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Luke 11:43 (Love): Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.