

Matthew 6:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Analysis

The warning against 'vain repetitions' (Greek 'battalogeo'—meaningless babbling) condemns mindless, mechanical prayer that multiplies words without heart engagement. The comparison to heathens who think 'they shall be heard for their much speaking' references pagan practices of repetitive incantations designed to manipulate deities. True prayer is personal communion with the Father who knows our needs, not magical formulas to coerce divine action. Quality of relationship matters infinitely more than quantity of words.

Historical Context

Pagan prayers in the Greco-Roman world often involved repetitive formulas, magical names, and lengthy invocations attempting to gain gods' attention through sheer volume. Some Jewish traditions also developed elaborate, lengthy prayers. Jesus condemns empty verbosity while affirming persistent, heartfelt prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can you distinguish between wrong 'vain repetitions' and right persistent prayer or liturgical forms?
2. What does this warning teach about viewing prayer as relationship with a personal Father versus mechanical religious ritual?

Interlinear Text

Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βαττολογήσητε, ὡσπερ οἱ
when ye pray But not use as G3588
G4336 G1161 G3361 G945 G5618

ἐθνικοί δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν
the heathen they think do for that for G3588 much speaking their
G1482 G1380 G1063 G3754 G1722 G4180 G846

εἰσακουσθήσονται
they shall be heard
G1522

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 5:7 (Parallel theme): For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

Matthew 26:44 (Prayer): And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Acts 19:34 (Parallel theme): But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Matthew 6:32 (Parallel theme): (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Matthew 26:42 (Prayer): He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Matthew 18:17 (Parallel theme): And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Matthew 26:39 (Prayer): And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

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