

Series	Sermon on the Mount
Study	Study 9
Topic	True Spirituality and HYPOCRISY
Reference	Matthew 6:1-8
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

Welcome back to another episode of Gamma. We are going to be continuing our series on the Sermon on the Mount. We are starting Matthew chapter 6 verses 1 to 8. And today is a very important topic is talking about true spirituality, a relationship with God and a significant problem of hypocrisy within the church and within our own lives. So let's start off by reading Matthew chapter 6 verse 1 onwards. Matthew chapter 6 verse 1

Matthew 6:1 (ESV) Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Before we go on with our lesson today, we need to recap what we've done the last week. We ended off with Matthew chapter 5 verse 48 where Jesus concluded this lesson by saying,

You therefore must be perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect.

We have decided that this perfection is not being sinless but being complete. The context was being complete in adherence to the law of God and basically what the Pharisees were doing, they were pretty good at the external compliance with the law; do not murder, do not commit adultery. But underneath that the spirit of law was hatred or lust and they weren't very good at that and they tended to ignore that and just obey what was on the surface and Jesus says that's not good enough.

When you talk about the negative aspects of righteousness, you must not only not murder nor commit adultery but you mustn't hate nor have any lust. And so therefore this righteousness that Jesus talks about that his disciples must have should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It is more than that, it is deeper. So it applies to the area of integrity, retaliation, love for enemies, anger and we've gone through all that last week. This week we're looking at the positive aspects of righteousness. We are looking at prayer, good work that people do and underlying motive behind them, which is basically you pray because you love God, do good works to help the poor. Why? Because you love them because you love God. These are the positive aspects of righteousness.

So in these positive aspects of righteousness being complete as our Father in Heaven is complete we are to beware, which is Matthew chapter 6 verses 1 to 8; beware. D.A. Carson writes,

The demand for genuine perfection loses itself in the lesser goal of external piety; the goal of pleasing the Father is traded for its shrunken cousin, the goal of pleasing men. It almost seems as if the greater the demand for holiness, the greater the opportunity for hypocrisy.

So Matthew chapter 6 verse 1 begins,

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.

Now in its context in those days they would actually have trumpets outside the Jerusalem temple. At certain times of the day on certain days when there was a need particularly urgently the chap will go out to the temple and he will blow his horn and people all around will shutter their shops and they will start running down the streets in order to meet that need, to give alms to the poor or whatever the urgent need might be. And this was dramatic. It was seen by everybody. You could not miss it.

Fortunately, today we live in an era led by Western billionaires who have been giving large amounts of their fortune for charitable purposes; philanthropy. Remember Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. They have given billions of dollars to philanthropy followed by Mark Zuckerberg and his wife starting the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. But the trouble is, if you look at their philanthropy over the years, there was a review article by Robert Reich in the Stanford Social Innovation Review when he actually looked into this. He said, it was of actual failure of philanthropy. Why? Because a large proportion of the philanthropy actually given to religious groups for the maintenance of the facilities, operating cost, clergy, salary and of this social services to the poor amounted to less than 5%. A lot of philanthropy went to education, health and science, social welfare groups less than 2% and Human Services only 9%. And a lot of that was due to tax deductions which are beneficial to mega donors that actually deprives governments of revenue.

In recent years Chinese billionaires have followed in the same suit. Here is Jack Ma. 21st richest man in the world, pledged equivalent of 144 US million dollars for medical supplies for Wuhan in Hubei, as well as, USD 14 million for vaccines and over the last number of years 2006 to 2016, 10 years charitable foundations in China quadrupled in the last ten years. The Chinese are giving more to charity. But if you look at how they're giving. More than half of the philanthropists gave to charities affiliated with the government, which means a lot of philanthropy was targeted towards currying favor with the communist government. And they gave most often to education and least often to environmental causes the study found, and very little to the poor.

In this next slide you can see the top 10 country donors to US colleges from 2007 to November 2013 and you can see the top donors to US colleges were Hong Kong, UK, Canada, India, Saudi Arabia and even China and the biggest recipients, like for example from Hong Kong giving was to Princeton, Berkeley, Harvard and Stanford. Why are they giving large sums of money in philanthropy not to the poor but actually to these universities which are prestigious, which have lots and lots of endowment. Perhaps is due to vested interest. Perhaps they have their sons and daughters who need to go there. Because if you remember there was a huge scandal recently, which involve stars like Laura Loughlin and Felicity Huffman, who actually found to have negotiated entrance into the US university system from Chinese donors.

So philanthropy is not what it seems to be. Often the money given is for a particular purpose and it comes with strings attached. Very few people would just give money directly to the poor. Things haven't changed for the last two thousand years it would seem. We now come to a topic of Prayer. Matthew chapter 6 verse 5

when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your

Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him

So the context here is the during times of public fasts, especially after the afternoon sacrifice. There would be a trumpet that will be sounding from someone at the temple and people wherever they are in Jerusalem might be just, when they hear the trumpet will turn towards the direction of the temple and they will actually raise their hands and they will actually pray. This is a public display of piety, of holiness. And if you look in Matthew chapter 6 verse 1, the issue is the same

*Beware of **practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them,***

Matthew chapter 6 verse 5

*And when you pray, you must not be like the **hypocrites.***

You see being perfect or complete as your father is in heaven is perfect is basically have your outward behavior and your inward motives correlate exactly. When you pray, you pray because you love God and want to interact with him not because you want to be seen by someone outside. So the main problem we actually have here in this part of the Sermon on Mount, which actually affects a lot of us is hypocrisy.

So hypocrisy is a significant problem within the church. Let's look at the definition. The encyclopedic dictionary of religion describes hypocrisy as,

*A form of simulation directly against the virtue of truthfulness, an acted lie whereby a person uses the appearance of good deeds cloak unworthy designs of **self glorification or some fraudulent credit.** No man is a hypocrite for concealing his faults; he is not bound to advertise them, but rather the reverse*

Jesus condemnation of the Pharisees was often. Matthew 23:27

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

So he describes people who basically have two faces. One, an outward face which looks beautiful, holy, gentlemanly as it were but inside full of evil and uncleanness.

Hypocrisy is a great problem within the church. It actually gives people outside the church a really bad impression. Steven Weinberg said,

Good people will do good things, bad people will do bad things, but for good people to do bad things – well that takes religion

In fact there was a Barna research group in 2007 and they asked people why they rejected Christianity. Well there are three main reasons; One is anti-homosexual. Two is they were too judgmental and three, number three, 85% didn't want to accept Christianity because of hypocrisy. It is a huge problem.

In fact someone actually once said that,

Church is something like Noah's Ark, if it weren't for the storm outside you probably couldn't stand the smell inside.

Like it or not it affects all of us. But not only it affects all of us there is some danger. If you look in actually Matthew chapter 22 which later on we will deal with,

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

So therefore Jesus is actually saying, there are a lot of people in the kingdom, all right, apparently in the kingdom, who are in the church, who are actually not in the kingdom of God, whom God doesn't really know and they have behavior that's contradictory to what the gospel what Jesus teaches and they're often cast Christianity in a bad light.

Now let's go down and drill down into why is it that hypocrisy is such a big problem in the church? Well we've got two greats. One is an early church father Augustine and the other one is Jonathan Edwards, the great reformer in North America. Augustine said it was due to disordered love that you actually place, that you love various things in your life and they're all based on the relative value, and the trouble what we do is that we order our loves in a wrong kind of order. Jonathan Edwards says, it is something like that but what he says is that actually we love, it is so disordered that we actually love ourselves far more than we love God.

So the problem that causes hypocrisy is actually self love. Matthew 22 verse 37

*And he said to him, "You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

So Jesus is saying, only the two laws encapsulate everything that we need to do in our faith. And the first thing is to love God with all your heart, with you all soul and might, which means you love Him more than you love yourself. And the problem with hypocrisy, it's a self-defense mechanism where you actually show you actually love yourself more than you love God.

So hypocrisy is caused by disordered love or self-love. And here we actually have a hierarchy of love and love that we are to give is based on the value of the object to which our love is directed. And if you look at it, God should be number one because he is the most lovely, the most beautiful, the most good of all the universe. He is the creator of all. He is the definition of actual good. So if he is number one then we actually have to love him first compared to everybody else including ourselves. We need to be second, our neighbor needs to be second, our jobs or property and money and food, everything is subservient to that first love because the first love has the greatest value. And the problem with hypocrisy is that we do not place the one of greatest value on top, we place ourselves on top. And so therefore everything else is on the bottom, whether it be God or neighbor or job or

property, everything is subservient to our first love. And so Jonathan Edwards is correct. Hypocrisy is because we love ourselves more than we actually love God. Jonathan Edwards says,

Why is it difficult to pray? Why is it difficult to give? Why is it difficult to serve? Why are we hypocrites? Why? Because we love ourselves far more than we love God that's why we don't want to pray to Him, His holiness does not attract us, does not draw us. It is difficult to give because we are self-centered. We love ourselves, so therefore we keep the money for ourselves. Why should we serve others when that will detract from our time to serve ourselves? Ask yourself the question, do I pray more frequently and more fervently when alone with God more than I do in public. Do I love the secret place of prayer? Is my public praying simply overflow my private praying? Am I so busy scrambling my expressions to please my fellow worshipers? Then I'm not really concentrating my attention on God.

Jesus is saying, there are two kinds of Prayer relationships we can have with God. One is a transactional kind and the other one is grace based kind. It is like a boss employee based on the fact that you love yourself. The other one is between father and son, in fact that you love God. If it is a boss employee self-love kind of model, it is like we respond to an advertisement. If we are qualified to get the job we will get the job. It is reward based. So you work hard, you contribute, company makes profit. Now if it's in a family, you don't need to advertise, you're not qualified, you're just chosen by grace. His power is exercised in love and tenderness to you by grace, not in response to any of your efforts, no matter how hard or how little you put in, his love is there. The father does not work on profits, you don't actually contribute anything.

So therefore when it comes to prayer, the public prayer is more important than the private prayer if it's a boss employee or transactional kind of prayer relationship. Because you actually love yourself, you are trying to promote yourself. Petition is more prominent and is more elaborate because you're performing for God or for others in order to gain something. Self-esteem is based on the conviction of your own merit and goodness due to prayer, so you give more and you pray more, so therefore your self-esteem is built up, your sense of righteousness. And then you've got more anxiety and fear because if you don't perform you won't get your rewards. And they only seem to pray when you're in trouble, less in good times, you hardly pray, bad times you pray all the time.

If it is a father-son relationship, where it is based on love God first, their private prayer is more improvident. The prayers are response to grace. The purpose is to extend, to deepen, to sweeten the relationship and the fellowship. So the intimacy with God is based on his unconditional love of us, not based on our performance. Our hearts are more engaged. We can actually handle criticism and failure because they don't reflect our performance. His relationship with us, His love with us is not dependent on our performance and you don't have to do babbling long prayers because we're secure in our relationship with God.

So in hypocrisy what is the motives for prayer or giving or any good works? Well you do it because you love yourself more than you love God, so you do it out of fear because if you don't pray or you don't give or do good works maybe God will reward you or you do it because you want men to praise you for the glory of men or you do it because you feel that you can earn enough credit to basically get a place in heaven, self-salvation. Anyway, the whole problem with hypocrisy is that we actually have what we call in psychological terms as cognitive dissonance. When our actions are not in line with our principles like this cartoon. Bad liars are bad people but the problem is I just lied.

So how do you resolve this tension within our brains? Well it's easier. Let's say for example you've

got a person who murder, theft, rape or assault. These things are so obviously sins that you can't really hide them. So therefore it's obvious and we need to have insight, we need to admit we've murdered someone, we stole some money and then we confess and you repentance and that's resolution. But the problem is with hypocrisy it's hiding sins that can be easily hidden; deception, hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness, laziness, that kind of sins which are grayish more amorphous you can actually hide them and because they are so grayish and subtle you may not have any idea that they are actually sin. You may have no insight and so therefore you actually have an automatic psychological defense. And this defense is actually hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is a method of dealing with sin that actually prevents a solution. That's why hypocrisy is so subtle and so difficult to detect even in our own lives. If you look at Proverbs chapter 21 verse 2,

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

Jeremiah 17: 9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

So you can see that the Bible says that even in terms of the sinfulness and evil of a heart which includes hypocrisy it's difficult to detect. A man whatever he does seems right in his own eyes is justified. In fact if you look at the psychological data. Arnold Goldberg, a professor of psychiatry at Rush Medical College in Chicago says,

"Lying is as much a part of normal growth and development as telling the truth. The ability to lie is a human achievement, one of those abilities that tends to set them apart from all other species."

It is like a defense mechanism to justify ourselves. On top of lying we actually have self-defense mechanisms, which are generated because of our love of self. That's how we resolve our cognitive dissonance. The difference between our principles, our beliefs and our actions. First of all, it is called false compliance. For example, if you are a drunk salesman and you work for a boss who basically tells you to sell a particular drug for high blood pressure and you know it's not very good but it's your job to sell it. And the Boss is giving you 30 percent target to increase your sales before the end of the year, you know it's not that great and yet you have to convince yourself it's great and telling customers is even greater to get the sales. So this is a sort of self-defense mechanism because the love of self overrides the love of truth and God.

The other mechanism is post decision dissonance. This is an experiment in 1956 when the researcher Jack Bram conducted a study asking women which of the eight appliances like cookers and all that which they preferred. And they thought a lot about it and after that they came down to a choice of two appliances which they rated equally. And then after choosing the appliance they rated the one that they actually picked more favorably when you asked them again afterwards despite previously seeing them as equal. The implication is that once we've made a decision, we will put more effort not just into justifying by convincing ourselves it is objectively better.

Lastly, it is effort justification. An experiment was conducted by Aronson and Mills in 1959 where two groups of subjects were required to go through a type of initiation to enter an exclusive group. One initiation was mild and didn't require much effort while the other one was severe and

embarrassing but once they were initiated into the group even though the researchers presented an environment that was boring and dull the subjects who had a harder time getting in rated the group more highly than the other despite its flaws. And these are some of the psychological ways in which we actually justify ourselves, even though our principles contradict our actions.

You can see that very in President Trump for example, okay. He was asked recently, what would you have done differently facing this Covid pandemic? You know what he said. He said,

well...nothing. If you look at the death rate we are the lowest level including Germany.

And that's patently untrue because the US death rates are 96254 as of 22nd of May, whereas German death rates are 8309. If you look death rates per 100,000 people, the US is about two and a half times greater than Germany at 24.66 person per 100,000 and Germany death rate was about 9.24.

So this is an example of post decision dissonance. Once he has made a decision he has to justify it even though it's hypocritical. There are also other compounding factors to our hypocrisy; Social pressure. Sometimes we forget what we've said years ago. So problem with memory and time. A lack of consequences because hypocrisy usually doesn't have too much consequences, that's why we tend to be hypocrites. And the last one is to maintain credibility. And this is the problem of mainly Christian leaders who have to maintain credibility as leaders, leading holy lives and yet their personal lives do not bear this out and this is a significant burden leaders have to bear.

What are the things that compounds this problem hypocrisy?

You see, it is misunderstanding it with our struggle with sin. Romans chapter 7:21, Paul describes his struggle,

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death

Paul describes a struggle where he actually loves God and wants to do the right thing and yet in his flesh living in a sinful body he has difficulties. And it is reflected between the difference between what we want to do and our feelings. Hypocrisy is not the gap between doing and feeling. Some people wonder is it right for me to sing praise songs if I'm not feeling very worshipful this morning? Should I give generously because God commands us to give and God loves a cheerful giver, well but I'm not very cheerful this morning and I'm not very happy about giving and I'm not sure whether I should forgive the person who has hurt me, although He has commanded me to forgive them and it's the right thing to do. I don't feel like it. So hypocrisy is not the gap between doing and feeling. There's a gap between doing and feeling simply because we live in a sinful body.

Hypocrisy is a difference between, is the gap between your public face and your private motives. You pray in public because you want to show people how Godly you are. You do things out of that wrong motive and that is basically hypocrisy.

So, what is the solution?

Well, let me suggest there are threefold solutions found in this particular passage. We have to beware, we are to be real and we are to be focused. Look at chapter 6 verse 1

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them,

Here is Jesus asking us to beware. You see the problem is not just found among Pharisees. Jesus warns us in the Sermon of Mount because it involves all of us. All of us are recovering hypocrites. We are all stuck with the same psychological defense mechanisms that tries to protect our own self-esteem. Every aspect of church life, every program can be turned in the opportunity for hypocrisy. Simple things even like doing your quiet time, reading the daily bread. I remember as a young man going to a Christian camp in school and you know early in the morning everybody would be walking around the beach, finding a clear spot to sit in, they have time with God to pray, read their Bible and trouble is I never did that because I only do my quiet time at night. I'm a night person. In the morning I couldn't get up.

So therefore at the camp I actually saw what other people did and I had to pull myself up from bed so that I would look as holy and as godly as they were. So I was doing it so that I would get the glory of man. You see, it is so inbuilt in us that we have to be so careful isn't it. Take for example, a prayer meeting. One could pray aloud and sometimes you pray aloud with deep theological terms to impress others to gain the glory of others but another person can also refuse to pray because he wants to maintain his pride and self-esteem because he feels that praying aloud will reveal his lack of eloquence or depth and people would think less of him. So they both have the wrong motive. One has the wrong motive of praying aloud, you want to get glory from man. The other refuses to pray because he doesn't want to lose his glory in front of man. The right motive for both of them is to pray to God to encourage each other and to glorify God. Same thing goes with serving, singing, leading Bible study. One person does it to gain glory in the eyes of others and the other doesn't do it because he wants to maintain his own glory to prevent the loss of glory, that he didn't want to seem less competent when the other person.

So we must lead or sing simply because we want to please God and serve others and how we perform is not really relevant if the leadership has tapped us to serve. So we should actually simply serve.

Another form of hypocrisy is comparing. We like to compare, criticize, judge. When you blame and criticize others you are actually avoiding some truth about yourself. Why is it that speaking about the faults of others makes us feel good about ourselves? Because we're comparing. We are comparing others and a favorite target of this judgment is basically the behavior of clergy or leaders. They're there because they've answered the call to serve, not because they're more perfect than us, so you tear them down and when we tear them down we feel that we're better about ourselves because simply because when we compare to them they're supposed to be the paragon of virtue and we're not and if they fall down it makes us feel better isn't it. So comparing is a form of hypocrisy.

We ought to take spiritual growth like a golf game. You know the golfers have handicaps, different handicaps and when getting on a golf course you don't actually have to play and compete against other people. You're playing to improve your handicap.

The second point from the passage to overcome hypocrisy is that we need to be real. So therefore Jesus tells us to give or pray, all done in secret. Why? To avoid honor and glamour for men. So that that would not be our sole motive. To please our Heavenly Father and to actually meet a real need

by praying, because the love of Christ has transformed us and filled us with his love so that we want to reciprocate by communicating with him. We want to reciprocate that love by loving other people and praying for their needs and what is the result of the action in both situation by giving or praying. The result of the action is spiritual reward. We don't pray or give in order to get spiritual reward but is a consequence of our genuine action. But that doesn't mean that we're always going to pray in secret in our tiny little room at home. There are a lot of public prayers in the book of Acts. Chapter 2,

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers

This happened in each others' house. Acts chapter 4,

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God

This is public prayer. So important thing is that we need to be real, which means you don't have to be perfect but our actions and our motives ought to line up together. For example, if you've got a church business meeting, sometimes people speak up in order to be noticed, to show people how clever they are with their answers, or to show how stupid the leaders are by their questions. Sometimes people don't even speak up because even if they have a genuine inquiry because they fear by speaking up to demonstrate their stupidity and so therefore they won't speak up, so they're afraid of losing glory. So in that way you also being hypocritical. There is a fear of being diminished. If there's a genuine issue we should actually speak up because you want everybody to benefit from the question and the answer that clarifies. You speak up in order to build up.

If you look at the grim tale of Ananias and Sapphira. Here you have two people, an example of hypocrisy which was really punished and you can see in Acts chapter 5,

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?"

Here you actually see that they were hypocrites. Everybody else around was selling their homes and giving the entire amount to the apostles. So every time someone come and lay the check or the money before the apostles feet, it would imply that was the entire amount or the proceeds from sales of the property. And so when an Ananias came and brought this money, it was assumed. He would hope that they will assume that was whole amount, they actually kept back some. So therefore it is motive, what was his motive. His motive was the glory of man. So he would be seen as generous as everybody else. It was like peer pressure.

So being real. What he should have been, he should have done instead, he didn't have to be perfect. He had to decide that he gave a portion of the proceeds to God and he goes to disciples and tell him look I've only given half because that's what the Lord has led me to and that would not have been a problem. Being real means we need to distinguish between feelings and motives. For example, the Lord's Supper. Suppose you're at church and it's the first Sunday and the Lord's Supper is to be served but you had a disagreement with your colleagues at work. There was ongoing negotiations not settled yet and it is really troubling you and you didn't feel particularly worthy. You felt sinful. But you're a leader and everybody's around you, doing the Lord's Supper is looking at you. If you

don't take it, it will reveal that you're harboring some sort of sin. If you would take it, you feel unworthy. What do you do? The question is that we need to be real. Our actions must align with our motives. If we take it to keep up appearances, we're condemned. If we take it because our worthiness is based on the death of Christ on the cross and not on your performance and you have already confess your sin, it doesn't matter how you feel. You might not feel worthy but you take the Lord's Supper because his death is relevant for you and you're participating on that which is real. So if you do that, there is not a problem.

Lastly, we shouldn't confuse obedience and feelings. Sometimes you don't pray because you don't feel like praying, you don't give because you don't feel like giving cheerfully. Imagine in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus is about to sacrifice himself on the cross for the sins of the whole world. What do you think his feelings were? Do you think he was really eager, "O Lord let me get up on the cross, I can't wait Lord." No. He had an awful feeling. He didn't feel like doing it and he's actually prays that Lord if you know if this cup can pass for me just let it pass and he was sweating great drops of blood.

So obedience and feelings are not the same as hypocrisy. You may obey because it's the right thing to do in your mind and your feelings will follow the decisions of your mind.

The last point that we need to be focused. Matthew chapter 6 verse 7

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,

So therefore when we pray we need to be focused at the task at hand where we are communicating with God for the needs of others and ourselves and to glorify Him. And so therefore we are not to heap up empty phrases. Sometimes we are babbling or persisting in our prayers simply because prayer has become a means of controlling God rather than the means of grace. It is again putting self-love first.

Here you have a picture of Pastor Paula White-Cain who is now the spiritual advisor of President Trump. She's a believer of the Word of Faith Movement. The Word of Faith Movement is something like what Jesus is talking about. They believe in the force of faith, which is the foundation of the Word of Faith theology. They believe that they can use words, like in prayer to manipulate the faith force and thus actually create what they believe scripture promises, which is health and wealth. The laws supposedly governing the faith force are said to operate independent of God's sovereign will. In fact God himself is like subject to the laws of faith. So if you actually say something out in faith God has to supply what you've asked. Here is a quotation from Pastor Paula White-Cain's website, asking people to donate money to them and this is what she says,

With obedience to this first-fruits instruction and your faith, I believe your purpose, your year, your prosperity, and power will release blessing upon your entire year! Amen! And I declare the weight you have been carrying is lifted, let every yoke break off you NOW. For I decree you are about to INHERIT your Promised Land! 2019 is a year of deliverance and prosperity for you. It begins right now with the biblical principle of First Fruits

Here is babbling. Here is what she is doing, she is declaring by faith of what is to come to pass. Here

is D.A. Carson who says,

Prayer should not consist of heaped-up phrases, idle repetitions, and the ridiculous assumption that the probability of an answer is in proportion to the total number of words in the prayer.

So if you look at verses 9 and 10, our focus on prayer is to be on the kingdom, not what we can get out of God, our father who art in heaven hallowed be your home. Your kingdom come and your will be done.

So we need to beware, we need to be real and we need to be focused.

May God bless you in the coming week as you meditate on this and as you discuss this in your individual groups. Amen.