

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

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Lessons from Proverbs: Quit Praying, Start Obeying

A Mask You Should Never Wear!

Most of us don't like wearing masks during this pandemic. I don't. But let's make sure that the *physical* mask is the only one we are wearing. Let's never, under any circumstance, wear the mask of a hypocrite (remember, the Greek word, *hypokritēs*, refers to an actor who performs “under a mask.”)

Unfortunately, there are almost always some actors in a church. Sometimes, they lead flowery, impressive, solemn public prayers and garner praise for their “beautiful words.” I've confessed before that hearing those prayers intimidated me when I young because I never felt I could pray “like that.” After I started preaching full-time, I knew that when I attended a gospel meeting, I would be asked to lead prayer because — apparently — the only men qualified to lead a prayer at gospel meetings are preachers. One time, Christie and I were a couple of minutes late to a meeting and two of the elders were actually standing on the steps outside, waiting for a visiting preacher to show up so they could ask them to pray. They asked me, even though there were many other men at that assembly.

The gift of gab can come in handy, but I have to say I love the episode in the story of Moses when he tries to get out of his leadership role by saying, “*Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent... I am slow of speech and tongue.*” (Ironically, or ignorantly, Cecil B. DeMille chose one of the most eloquent actors of all time, Charlton Heston, to play Moses in his epic movie, *The Ten Commandments*).

Eloquence is overrated. Some of the men who led those flowery, poetic prayers in church buildings were later exposed as frauds, having engaged, for some time, in all kinds of wickedness, even as they prayed. Proverbs has something to say about that:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. (Proverbs 15:8)

The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Proverbs 15:29)

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. (Proverbs 28:9)

The men who prayed those “fancy prayers” should have quit praying and started obeying a long time ago. They must have thought that praying could substitute for obeying, but they forgot or ignored God's words to Saul (through Samuel): “*to obey is better than sacrifice...*” But we know that the praise of others is a powerful intoxicant (Matthew 6:5).

God doesn't listen to the prayer of anyone who is making a practice of wickedness. The Proverbs above make that clear and so does Isaiah: “*...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear*” (Isaiah 59:2).

If you find yourself steeped in sin, it's time to quit praying and start obeying. After all, it is the prayer of a righteous person that has great power (James 5:16).

*Unless otherwise indicated the opinions expressed in this publication and images used are solely those of David Posey.
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