

## ACCEPTABLE PRAYER LIFTING UP HOLY HANDS

### Int.

1. Aim: To explain the text and what it really means to lift up holy hands.
2. Prayer that is acceptable to God must be:
  - a. Offered To God - John 16:23-24
  - b. Through Christ
  - c. According to His Will
  - d. From a Righteous person
  - e. Asking in Faith
3. We will emphasize the Righteous person praying to God as we look at this verse.
4. 1 Tim. 2:8 "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."
5. The phrase "Lifting up holy hands" is being used by many religious folks today to justify the practice of holding up one's arms in the worship assembly. Even some in the churches of Christ are beginning to do these things.
6. Is this ok? Or is it wrong? What does this passage mean?

### Discussion

#### I. POSTURES IN PRAYER

- A. The Bible mentions at least 7 different postures of a person praying
  1. Kneeling is the most prominent mode or posture for offering prayer
    - a. Kneeling specifically conveys humility before God - a readiness to bow to the will of the one being approached.

- b. In the Greek world, kneeling was what a slave would do before his master or what a worshiper would do before his gods.
    - c. Kneeling in Bible times signified submission, humiliation, abasement, respect and awe.
2. Kneeling in prayer occurs in at least three forms:
  - (1) With head bowed - Ps. 95:6
  - (2) With arms raised - 1 Kings 8:54 - II Chron. 6:13 - Ezra 9:5
  - (3) Prostrate - knees tucked in a crouched position with face or forehead touching the ground - I Kings 18:42 and Matt. 26:39
3. Standing is another prominent posture of prayer -
  - a. This also takes three forms
    - (1) With head bowed - Gen. 24:26,48 Neh. 8:6 Luk 18:13
    - (2) With eyes uplifted - Lk. 18:11
    - (3) With arms raised - I Kings 8:22 Neh. 8:6
  - b. Lifting up outstretched hands expressed the fact that a request was being made. The arms would be spread out with open upturned palms symbolical of the act of receiving.
4. A seventh prayer posture hinted at in the Bible is the act of lying face down on the ground
  - a. Josh. 7:6,10
  - b. The term "prostrate" may sometimes be used to refer to this posture since the Latin term from which this comes "prosternere" means "to stretch out before."
5. When prayer is mentioned in the Bible it does not always describe the position of the body during the prayer.

- B. There are seven prayer postures mentioned in the Bible:
1. Standing with head bowed
  2. Standing with eyes uplifted
  3. Standing with arms raised
  4. Kneeling with head bowed
  5. Kneeling with arms raised
  6. Kneeling in prostrate position with face or forehead touching the ground
  7. Prostrate - laying face down on the ground
- C. Illustrations: Kneeling or Standing - Poem - "The proper way to pray"

## **II. ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION**

- A. The emphasis in the Bible is not on the posture of the person praying but on the attitude of the person and the thoughts of the prayer
1. The posture of a person praying is optional and of no major concern.
  2. The main thing is that the prayer is from a sincere heart that is not corrupted by improper motives. - like praying to be seen and heard of others
- B. Worship in the New Testament is free from external ritual and show
1. John 4:24
  2. Worship is not designed by God to impress the worshiper - the focus is on God
  3. Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His day for their constant attention to external display, appearances, show and hype.
    - a. Matt. 6:5-6 - hypocrites pray in the synagogues and on street corners
    - b. Matt. 6:16-18 - fast so men can know it

- c. Matt. 23:5-7; 25-30 - do these things to be seen of men
  - d. Lk. 18:10-14
4. Jesus directed the Samaritan woman's attention away from external location -  
John 4:21 -

### **III. WHAT ABOUT THE PRACTICE OF 'LIFTING UP HANDS' ?**

- A. One of the positions of prayer is to "lift up hands"
- 1. There are some within the churches of Christ today that are beginning to do something called "lifting up holy hands"
  - 2. They hold up their hands during the assembly and sway them from side to side
  - 3. Many times they are singing and standing up while swaying their hands back and forth from side to side.
  - 4. The ones who are promoting this "lifting up of holy hands" claim that this makes the worship service more meaningful. It makes the people feel better about the worship. Many complain that the worship service is boring and dull. This they claim helps get the people involved and makes for a more spiritual worship.
- B. What is the source of this practice?
- 1. There are some within the church who are trying to change the church - they desire that we be like the denominational world.
  - 2. The denominational world has been doing this "lifting up holy hands" fad for several years. True of the charismatic groups !
  - 3. Some have borrowed this practice from these other religious groups.
- C. Is there anything wrong with this? Is this not mentioned in 1 Tim. 2:8

#### **IV. WHAT DOES I TIM 2:8 MEAN ?**

- A. In this context Paul is contrasting the role of men and women - v. 8-15
1. He has been talking in the first few verses about praying for the rulers
  2. Now in v. 8 he begins by talking about the men praying
  3. He desires that men pray every where - Paul's instruction does not merely apply to the worship assembly but to worship wherever and whenever it is offered.
  4. Men - the word used here in the Greek refers to the Male / in contrast to the female - this was specifically to the Men !
  5. The women are restricted in public speaking - v. 12
- B. Here he gives three qualifications for the men leading prayers:
1. Lift Up Holy Hands
  2. Without Wrath
  3. Without Doubting
- C. **"Lifting Up Holy Hands"**
1. This is a figure of speech called metonymy in which the writer substitutes an association word for what is actually meant.
    - a. In this verse a posture of prayer is mentioned in place of prayer itself.
    - b. The verse is not speaking literally of holding up one's arms.
    - c. But Paul is stressing the necessity of public prayers coming from holy lives.
  2. "Holy Hands"
    - a. Holy = clean, pure
    - b. Prayer is effective only if the one leading prayer is living a holy life

- c. Jas. 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
3. "Holy Kiss"
- a. This is comparable to the verse that talks about a holy kiss
  - b. Rom. 16:16 "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you."
  - c. Paul is not telling them to kiss - but regulating what is already being practiced in their culture - their way of greeting was by kissing - he said that the kissing must be holy
  - d. Greeting one another must be pure and holy.
  - e. In like manner the prayers we pray should be from pure and holy hearts and lives. He is not telling us to lift up our hands as we pray.
4. Inconsistencies - those who are "lifting up holy hands" during worship are not consistent in their practices..... For example
- (1) Do they lift up their hands in private prayer at home? Or is it only done in the public assembly so others can see ?
  - (2) Is this done only during prayer?
    - (a) Those who practice "lifting Holy Hands" do this while singing
    - (b) In the verse mentioned - 1 Tim. 2:8 - it was during prayer
    - (c) There is no scripture that talks about lifting up hands during singing.

- (3) A third inconsistency about those who “Lift up Holy Hands” is the tendency to sway the arms from side to side
- (a) There is no scriptural authority for swaying
  - (b) We do not have any example of anyone doing this
- (4) It was only the men in 1 Tim. 2:8
- (a) Today those who lift up holy hands allow the women to do this
  - (b) Only the men are mentioned in this verse

D. The second condition is that men pray **“without wrath.”**

1. This denotes a disposition of mind.
2. A man that leads in worship should not have such a disposition that displays anger towards God, his provisions nor his commandments.
3. Further, he should exhibit anger neither towards his fellow Christian nor his fellow man. The reason for such is found in James 1:20 which says, **“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”**

E. The third condition is that men pray **“without doubting.”**

1. The one leading us in worship ought to do so believing that his worship will come before the throne of God.
2. In this way, his worship is offered in faith (James 1:6).
3. Jesus taught, **“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”** (Mark 11:24).
4. Surely, we would not want a man to lead us in our worship that does not believe that God will accept our offering of “the sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15).

## **Conclusion**

1. We are living in a time of change - some are trying to make changes within the church.
  - a. They are trying to introduce new doctrines and practices
  - b. Often those who refuse to change are ridiculed and treated in an ugly way
  - c. Many churches have been split because of these changes some are introducing
2. "Lifting up Holy Hands" is one of these "changes" some have begun to practice
  - a. Why? Some have borrowed this from the denominational world
  - b. It seems that some want to change just for the sake of changing
  - c. But to change to be like the denominations or just to change is not scriptural
  - d. Whatever the reason - we do not have the right to change what God has given us!
3. The emphasis on "holy hands" refers to the posture of one's internal disposition. "The point here is that only men should lead in public prayer who can lift up 'clean hands'" (morally and spiritually clean). 2
4. The person doing the leading of our worship is to be the kind of person whose life is a reflection of holy living. 3
  - a. The prayers of a person who persists in sin are not heard (Isaiah 59:1-2; Micah 3:4; 1 Peter 3:12).
  - b. A person who willfully sins by forsaking the assemblies (Hebrews 10:25-26) persists in sin and his prayers are not heard by God.
  - c. Do we want someone to lead us in worship whose prayers are not heard beyond the four walls of our church building?
5. Let us pray as God has directed -
  - a. In public prayers men are to lead the prayers - not women
  - b. These men are to be good examples of living - pure, holy, righteous men
  - c. They are to pray without wrath and without doubt.

**Sources**

1. Piloting the Straight - Dave Miller P. 224 - 231
  2. Gospel Gazette Vol. 1, No. 10 Page 15 October 1999  
<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/1999/oct/page15.shtml>
  3. Gospel Gazette - <http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2000/may/page15.shtml>
  4. Lifting Up Holy Hands by Wayne Burger - Firm Foundation May 1996
- 

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Oct. 15, 2006 Sunday Night  
Evans Church of Christ  
515 Gibbs Road  
Evans, Ga. 30809  
706-855-1249  
[arthurpigman@cybrtyme.com](mailto:arthurpigman@cybrtyme.com)