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### 3 - MINUTE SERMONS

#### KEEP ON BABBLING

The NIV renders Matthew 6:7, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they shall be heard because of their many words." W.E. Vine explains "babbling" (SPERMOLOGOS) by saying, "It seems to have been used of a man accustomed to hang about the streets and markets, picking up scraps which fall from loads; hence a parasite, who lives at the expense of others." He then adds, "Metaphorically it became used of a man who picks up scraps of information and retails them secondhand." These thoughts offer a good commentary on the "vain repetitions" of the Authorized Version.

"Vain repetitions". This is the only time the word "repetitions" is found in the New Testament; and, in and of itself, the word says little, as to good or bad. It needs an adjective to tell us the kind of repetition that is under consideration; and, the word "vain" does that job well. Simply put, the word "vain" means "empty, or meaningless". So, Jesus was telling his audience to not use meaningless or empty repetitions in their prayers. Don't "keep on babbling" as do the heathen or pagans. The word "babbling" is a more colorful word, and it carries a stronger punch in regards to this sinful practice.

Jesus, also, gives the motive of such babbling, "They think they shall be heard because of their many words." With this thought in mind, it is not "repetition" that is here condemned, but it is "vain repetitions", perhaps repetitions used because of the desire to say more, or to repeat what we have heard others say, or in order to gain the compliments of others. This may remind one of 1 Kings 18:26ff, where Elijah was urging the prophets of Baal to holler louder and more, as he mocked them.

Do you know anyone who prays these sorts of prayers, privately or publicly?

In view of the above, in order to improve this aspect of worship, my conclusion would be that: first, we need to examine our motives, take a good honest look at our hearts (2 Corinthians 13:5). Be sure we are praying to God, not to be "heard of men". Secondly, we need to give more thought to the words and expressions which we use in our prayers. Listening to the prayers of others may afford us some good examples of prayer; but when we follow those good examples, let us be sure that it is your "heart's desire and prayer to God." May we ever refrain from being babblers; don't keep on babbling!