

HOW'S YOUR PRAYER LIFE?

By Danny Tunnell

Many Christians feel that they are coming up short in this area. After all, the Bible says to “pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17.) We know that Jesus went to a mountain and prayed all night long. (Luke 6:12.)

Let's think about it. The closer we are to God, the better our prayer life will be. We learn about God by reading the Bible. We really don't know Him any better than we understand His Word. We don't love Him any more than we honor His commands.

Meditating on Scripture brings us and keeps us close to God. We are to delight in God's Law, and meditate on it day and night. (Psalm 1:2.)

Being closer to God will do wonders for our prayer life!

Prayer is such a great benefit for the Christian. Our society sometimes tries to make prayer a more formal matter. We've given nice sounding names to

prayer such as “an invocation” or “a benediction.” But prayer is simply speaking to God with faith in our hearts. It is believing God, and with God anything is possible.

Perhaps we've all been guilty of looking at the condition of our culture and it's radical departure from God and biblical truth, and then railing against society. And yet, the greatest thing we could do to turn our culture around and back to God is not found in words of attack and condemnation, but rather in simple, earnest, and believing prayer.

Jesus was known for His prayer life. Withdrawing Himself, He often went into the wilderness to pray. (Luke 5:16.)

Here's a sobering question: Is that what Christians are known for today? Is the place where Christians worship known as a “house of prayer?” Or is it a place known more for its activities, events, and personalities?

Are we known as a people who are trying to change the world by our own feeble efforts? Or are we trying to win souls and change the world by having a real dependence on enlisting God's help through prayer?

— Miami, OK

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” (James 5:16-18.)

DECISIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

By Glen Walton

Decisions have tremendous implications for our lives. I read somewhere of a young man who was planning a medical career who had to make a decision one evening about studying or attending a ball game. He attended the game and the next day made a low grade on the test. It so happened that the low grade kept him out of medical school, and made it necessary for him to change his plans for the future.

At times, what seems to be an innocent choice is fraught with grave consequences.

A man named Lot once made what seemed to be an innocent choice. Strife arose between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of his kinsman, Abram. In order to avoid even more serious problems, Abram thought it best for them to separate, but gave Lot the privilege of choosing whatever land he desired. Lot chose the plain of Jordan and journeyed east. He

“pitched his tent toward Sodom.” (Genesis 13:12.) What seemingly was an innocent choice led to disaster. In Sodom his righteous soul was vexed, and he lost a part of his family. Even in fleeing the tragedy continued. His wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Afterward, his daughters, contaminated by the immorality of that wicked place, made their father drunk and conceived children by him. Moses, in Genesis 18-19, shows us the real ugliness of this innocent but unwise decision.

But there are better examples in the book of God. “By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” (Hebrews 11:24,25.) Moses chose God and His people, and became God's great leader and lawgiver. As long as the world stands, his influence for

good will abide.

May God bless us in our decisions. These are very important to the worth of our own lives and the lives of those around us. Undergirded by good moral principles, and with our attention focused on things eternal, we can make decisions which are sound and good.

— Amarillo, TX

“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14,15.)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

TRADITION AND COMMAND

By Chris McCurley

Through the years, churches have split or have died where they sat because they could not distinguish between tradition and command. They invalidated the scriptures that speak of love, grace, mercy, and compassion in favor of clinging to their time-honored traditions. They broke God's law to keep human law. Whether it be the KJV only controversy, or stained glass windows, or a steeple, or a cross displayed somewhere in the building, or a piece of furniture that has to have, “This Do In Remembrance of Me,” etched across it.

It sounds silly, but it's tragic. Traditions become tragic when they become our god. And they become tragic when we're willing to destroy our brother or sister over them. That was the great crime of the Pharisees. Their allegiance to their traditions had blinded them to the needs of the people. Remember Matthew 23:23, 24: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

Justice, mercy, and faithfulness are people-related. Tithing the mint and dill and cummin is not. The Pharisees were so meticulous that they would tithe the single plants from their garden, but were cruel, arrogant, and unjust toward others. That spirit is not dead. Unfortunately, there are those in the church who wear the right clothes, they put their check in the offering plate each week, they attend both times on Sunday, yet they are rude to the waitress at lunch. They are a pompous jerk at work. They act like a fool at the basketball game as they yell and scream at the refs and the coach. They have all the outward actions of religion on Sunday, yet their actions during the week are completely irreligious. The externals mean nothing if the heart isn't right.

No matter how valid our traditions may seem, they are completely worthless if they ignore the greater virtues.

— Abilene, TX

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17,18.)

THE SECRET TO CONTENTMENT

By Cecil Burch

The traveler asked, “What kind of weather are we going to have today?” The old shepherd replied, “The kind of weather I like.” “How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?” the traveler scoffed. The shepherd answered, “Having found out sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learned to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like.”

We read of another shepherd in the Old Testament, named David, who said, “This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24.)

The Apostle Paul did not allow himself to be discouraged even though he knew he would face imprisonment, and he refused to let it affect the preaching of the Gospel. When he was on his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and met with the elders from Ephesus. After he had given them instructions he also told them, “I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there . . . but none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy.” (Acts 20:22,24.) When Paul came to Caesarea, the prophet Agabus took the apostle's belt and bound his own hands and feet and said, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt.” They pleaded with him not to go. Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:13.)

In this world of wars, conflicts, and heartaches that try the very depth of our souls we can still say with confidence that we do not know what the future holds but we know Him who holds the future!

— Amarillo, TX

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me . . . Indeed I have all and abound.” (Philippians 4:11-13, 18.)

NOT YET HOME!

By Milton Smith

Albert Brumley wrote a hymn some years ago entitled, *This World Is Not My Home*. This beloved and popular hymn begins with the words, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru."

Truer words were never written!

In reference to those faithful saints of old, the Hebrew writer tells us, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13.)

We are all strangers in this world! Both Paul and Peter described our physical bodies as nothing more than earthly "tabernacles"; in other words, temporary, earthly dwelling places for our eternal spirits.

Because earth is filled with such unpleasant things like sorrow, sickness, pain, aging, and death, this world is not suited as our eternal home. Even earthly joys and pleasures are transient. This world is unable to provide us with that eternal bliss that the human spirit longs for. Job did not desire to always live in this world. (Job 7:16.) David spoke of someday "flying away." (Psalms 55:6.) Paul desired to depart this world to be with Christ. (Philippians 1:23.) Peter looked to the day when he would "cast off" his earthly tabernacle. (2 Peter 1:14.)

Jesus, Himself, has gone to prepare an eternal abode for the faithful. (John 14:2-3.) What a wonderful thought to know that this eternal home will be free of those things that bring so much suffering to us in this life. Sorrow, pain, darkness, and death will be left outside the gates of our new home. Matter of fact, nothing will be permitted to enter into our future abode that might corrupt it. (Revelation 21:27.) Peter describes our heavenly home as "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fades not away." (1 Peter 1:4.)

It is in this future home that the redeemed of all ages will live and eternal life will be possessed. The next time this world might get you a little down, just remember the beloved words of that old hymn:

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru."

— Tulsa, OK

EDITORIAL . . .

DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

By Dalton Key

Have you ever been tempted?

If you are human, you have. In fact, life in the flesh is a continuing series of trials and temptations. It is our response to life's temptations which determines our happiness here as well as our eternal home beyond the grave.

None of us lives above temptation. The Bible is clear: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." (James 1:14.)

Even our Lord was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.) At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus was "tempted for forty days by the devil." (Luke 4:2.) He did not yield, yet when the devil ceased the temptations, "he departed from Him" not forever, but "until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13.) Like us, our Lord's temptations were ongoing and pervasive.

Seeing God's own dear Son face Satan's manifold temptations should prepare us to face the clear and certain fact that we, too, will be tempted. And these temptations will continue so long as this life of flesh continues. The young are tempted (2 Timothy 2:22), but so are those older, as was the case with Moses and David.

But this is not the end of the story. There is more. There is good news. Observe: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." (1 John 5:4.) "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4.)

Christ taught us to pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13.) And don't forget that James encourages us to pray "in faith, with no doubt." (James 1:6.)

Never forget that God has promised, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7.) As was the case with Christ, he will not leave forever, but he will leave!

A firm and unwavering, "NO!" goes a long way in putting the devil to flight.

Temptation is real and Satan appears relentless, but as God's children we have all the help we need. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

**UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD**

By Bobby Key

This is a wicked world. Iniquity abounds and the love of many has waxed cold. The Apostle John declared, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19.) In this materialistic age it is difficult for the Christian to keep himself unspotted from the world. This evil world continues to pull us away from God and righteousness. The greatest of all wars is the war between right and wrong. Every responsible person is on one side or the other. No one can remain neutral. If you are not for Christ you are against Him. God is leading the forces of right and righteousness; the devil leads the forces of evil. Ever since the tragedy in Eden every one has been crippled and blinded by sin. We are unable to walk alone. The god of this world has blinded the minds of most people. (2 Corinthians 4:4.) Sin so warps the thinking of many to the point where evil is seen as good and

good as evil. Paul tells us that some will have their conscience seared with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:2.)

My brother, we can be so deceived by the world and by sin that we become past feeling. We can get to the point that we just don't care anymore.

There are four basic things all Christians must come to realize: (1) By yourself, you can't win against sin. Lord Byron, who lived a lifetime in pleasure, once said, "There's not a joy in the world that can give like it takes away." Sin brings pain. God's children are made to feel pain when yielding to sin. And woe to the man who sins without pain; he feels nothing and continues in sin. The wages of sin, though, is still death. (Romans 6:23.) (2) We live in the world, but we are not of the world. We are taught, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1

John 2:15.) (3) The pleasures of sin last but for a season. "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17.) Remember, the things which are seen are temporal and temporary; the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18.) (4) With the help of the Lord we can overcome the world and its evil. "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world . . . For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." (1 John 4:4;5:4.)

Don't forget that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Galatians 1:4,5.)

Love People; Use Things

By Joe Slater

I expect you've seen the title of this article practiced in reverse, as I have: "Use People; Love Things." Sad, but true. King Solomon observed, "The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor. But the rich has many friends." (Proverbs 14:20.) Now, why would a poor man's neighbors hate him? And why would a rich man have many friends? The poor man doesn't have much to offer materially, so his neighbors can't use him. The rich man's "friends," however, see opportunity to use him to their advantage. "Many entreat the favor of nobility, and every man is a friend to one who gives gifts." (Proverbs 19:6.)

Solomon's half-brother Absalom used people to acquire the power he wanted. See how he buttered up the citizens who came to King David with legal issues: "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you . . . Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come

to me; then I would give him justice." (2 Samuel 15:3-4.) In short order, he conned them into proclaiming him king!

The Pharisees in John 8 used the woman taken in adultery to try to put Jesus into a dilemma. They cared nothing for her soul. All they wanted was to have an excuse to criticize the Lord. By contrast, Jesus loved her and sought her redemption.

The "good Samaritan" in Luke 10 loved his neighbor and used his money and other possessions to help him. Love people; use things. The man who had been robbed and beaten could do nothing materially for the Samaritan. But he needed help, and the Samaritan provided it.

As Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37).

— Justin, TX

"Therefore, whatever you want

men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12.) "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:9,10.)

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