

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

May 2007

**Our Savior
Teaches Us
to Pray**

60th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship

July 30 - August 2, 2007

Theme: **Falling in Love with Jesus . . . Again**

Monday Evening, July 30

6:50 - 7:20 pm Woodland Bible Camp Singers Concert

7:30 pm Loving Jesus means Looking for His Return Don McGee

Tuesday, July 31 Theme: Jesus and the Future

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Different Views, Proper Attitudes

David Tapp

10:20 Jesus and the Future for Islam

Don McGee

11:20 Exposition #1 of Matthew 24

Robert Garrett

1:15 Jesus and the Future for Israel

Don McGee

7:30 Loving Jesus means Living for Him

Dale Offutt

Wednesday, August 1 Theme: Living for Jesus

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Living for Jesus in the USA

Jerry Stephenson

10:20 Living for Jesus in Russia

Cecil Garrett

11:20 Exposition #2 of Matthew 24

Robert Garrett

1:15 Influencing Our Families to Live for Jesus

Dennis Kaufman

7:30 Sharing Jesus in the Home and Community

Sonny Childs

Thursday, August 2 Theme: Sharing Jesus with Others

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Looking for His Return is Personal

Bennie Hill

10:20 Sharing Jesus While It Is Day

Sonny Childs

11:20 Exposition #3 of Matthew 24

Robert Garrett

1:15 Jesus and America's Future

Don McGee

7:30 Remaining in Love with Jesus

Julius Hovan

Nursery facilities for babies/toddlers are available at both churches.

Children's Classes: grades K-2, 3-4, 5-6 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

Tim Parrot will teach grades 7-12 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

There will be a missions offering Wed. night; make checks to Ky/Ind Cn. Fellowship.

Housing Committee: Bud Ridgeway, (502) 499-0724; Clint Dorman (812) 246-2600

DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY

NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ,
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172

For CD's and DVD's of the messages, contact Don Stump: (502) 477-2252.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Editorial—

I Wish I'd Studied Archeology!

Alex V. Wilson

We are extremely sorry that the W&W has gotten very far behind schedule in recent months. We regret any harmful effects, especially in having olds instead of news. There are several causes. My mind works more slowly while my forgetter just gallops along.

Also Ruth and I on quite short notice moved from our house to a smaller one down the street. This was so our son Steve and his five children could move into our longtime home. Steve's wife Ruby died last year, and it's far more convenient to have the children and him near us rather than over the river in Indiana. But in the meantime, our "new" homes are *filled* with boxes of stuff. That includes my books, notes and materials—for sermons, classes, and W&W. Finding things sometimes requires the skill and perseverance of an archeologist searching for hidden treasures. In such cases it would be nice if life would slow down and no crises would arise, but such is not the case. In addition we were without a phone for some time, and could not get on the internet for at least 11 days. After we got back online, we could not retrieve the emails sent to us for that length of time. If you emailed us some important news between May 24-June 6, you probably need to send it again.

Thank you for bearing with us. And please pray for us too, that order may emerge from chaos. Our God is still Good – All the time!

Our Savior Teaches Us to Pray

A. V. W.

Brothers and sisters, let's not *repeat* the Lord's Prayer. Let's *pray* it. It can really search us out if we're honest. [See last month: "Praying Can Be Dangerous."] It's one of God's x-ray machines, telling us all sorts of things about ourselves. Let's look at it in more detail.

"OUR Father in HEAVEN"

Last month we discussed the implications of "Father." Now let's think about "Our." Some poet wisely wrote:

*You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "I."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "My."*

*Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer and not pray for another;
For when you ask for daily bread you must include your
brother.*

*For others are included in each and every plea.
From beginning to the end of it, it does not once say "Me."*

Instead of accenting I, Me, My, Mine – let there be more We, Us, Our. Let's not pray, "God, bless me and my wife; my son Bill and his wife: Us four, no more."

How much do you pray for the local church where God has led you? And for the Universal Church--the Lord's Family Worldwide? For Christians everywhere who are desperately poor? For fellow-saints who are cruelly persecuted? For foreign believers who are taking the Good News that "Jesus saves" to their own people, or building up God's people in their lands by teaching them the Holy Word? Or missionaries who've left their own homes and culture to make Jesus known?

Of course pray for non-Christians too--especially the unevangelized around the world. But right now we're thinking of the Fatherhood of God and thus of those people who have God as their Father because they have Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They're not just creatures of God but children of God because they've become disciples of Christ.

Remembering the "our" in this prayer should remind us as Christians that God has raised us all very *high*, and yet at the same time brought us all very *low*! High in privilege, low in deserving. Back around 400 A.D. Augustine pointed out (I paraphrase his words) that all of us Christians, no matter what our rank in society, pray in common, "*Our* Father." How great a humiliation that is for those who are "high society." The emperor (if a Christian) says these words, but so does the beggar. The slave prays these words as well as his owner. In other words, if God is *your* father and also *my* father, then you and I are brothers—even if you are the Emperor and I am only an unknown pauper! This truth raises up the lowly, but humbles the learned, the sophisticated and the mighty.

Augustine goes on to apply this truth (may we make the needed cross-cultural adjustments): The slave-owner should not look down on his slave, or refuse to think of him as a brother in Christ--just as much a church-member as he himself is. For the exalted Lord Christ is not too proud to think of that slave-owner as *His* brother and a member of *His* church! The gap God spans in stooping down from heaven to the slave-master is far more than the gap between the master and his slave.

Next, let us remember that we pray to Our Father *In HEAVEN*. As Father He's loving, gracious, tender: He is God Most *Nigh*. From Heaven He rules all the far-flung universe in His exalted sovereignty: He is God Most *High*. Lest we get irreverently chummy with Him—too casually buddy-buddy—let's remember that our Father is G-O-D. But lest we feel God couldn't possibly put up with our faults, failures, sins and selfishness—let's remember that God is our F-A-T-H-E-R. Dale Bruner reminds us of another fact: Lest we get too possessive and self-centered with our Father, the words "*in the Heavens*" (literally) remind us "that he is God not only in my sky but in all the skies of all the world."

Request 1: "May YOUR HOLY NAME be Honored"

O Father, may You Yourself be respected, revered, exalted, held in awe. A modern chorus says,

Our God is an awesome God,
He reigns in Heaven above
With wisdom, power and love:
Our God is an Awesome God!

And another song amplifies those thoughts:

You are beautiful beyond description,
Too marvelous for words,
Too wonderful for comprehension,
Like nothing ever seen or heard.
Who can grasp Your infinite wisdom?
Who can fathom the depths of Your love?
You are beautiful beyond description,
Majesty enthroned above.
And I stand, I stand in awe of You,
I stand, I stand in awe of You.
Holy God, to whom all praise is due,
I stand in awe of You.

When we can truly say and sing those words, then we are honoring our exalted Lord. Let us pray that others too may know and experience God in such a way, more and more.

Request 2: "YOUR KINGDOM Come"

"Kingdom" usually suggests to our minds either the idea of a *territory* or a *people* ruled over. Examples would include the United Kingdom of England and Scotland over which Elizabeth-2 is queen; or the kingdom of the Spaniards.

But the Greek word, while it may and sometimes does contain those ideas, primarily means *authority to rule or reign...kingly power...the activity of "kinging" or governing*. It is not so much a place or people as it is an authority or activity.

Thus in translating the Bible into Tagalog, the major language in the Philippines, the Bible Society chose Tagalog words which would be translated as follows in English: "The Ruling by God is near" (Matt. 3:2) -- God's rulership is approaching. "The ruling by God has come upon you," says Matt. 12:28, where kingdom cannot mean that a domain or area has arrived, but rather *God's kingly authority is present*--as demonstrated at that time by Christ's driving out demons from people.

The translators explain that by the Kingdom of heaven Jesus meant *not only the glorious future ruling but also "a here-and-now rulership by God that has practical implications in daily Christian living."* So "Your kingdom come" in the Tagalog Bible says, "May Your Ruling come," or "Your Kinging come."

This fits in with the parallelism often found in Jewish thought, where the same idea is repeated in different words. For, "Your kingdom come" is best explained by the following phrase, "Your Will Be Done, on earth as it is in heaven."

This prayer has a present **personal application** as we renew our Surrender to God's Will for us. Is there any area of your life where you do not want to do His will? Yield again: Trust Him enough to Follow Him.

Keith Miller said, "*Thy kingdom come*" means "*My kingdom go!*" We echo this request when we sincerely sing, "Have Thine own way, Lord... Mold me and make me after Thy will." Or, "Break down every idol, cast out every foe" (every rival in my heart). Or, "I'll put Jesus first in my life."

This petition can also **apply to the church and to our mission** to evangelize the world. First think about the Church. Many many church-members need to repent of disobedience (rebellion!) and to submit in a new and deeper way to God's authority.

But also world-missions, the Great Commission: How we need to tell the Good-News of Christ to untold millions world-wide, and across the street. The Kingdom of God has not come to many people (or rather, they have not come into it) because we have not told them about the King. Let us pray, "Your kingdom come: May Your rule

be deepened in me, and may Your rule be extended throughout the Earth.”

But the main thought in this petition is **Future**. It is a plea that God will hasten the day when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ forever, when He will take His great power and begin to reign publicly and powerfully. And at that time we shall share His triumph and His throne--His kingly authority.

Then His will shall be done on this planet as it is now done in Heaven itself. And His Name will be hallowed and worshipped by all nations. As foretold by prophets and psalmists and apostles of old, that will be a Golden Age indeed! “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

Request 3: “YOUR WILL be done on earth as it is in heaven”

How is it done in heaven? Lovingly, wholeheartedly, speedily, joyfully, worshipfully. How is it done on earth? Too often not in those ways.

Let me tell you about an incident long ago. When I was still in college, a church asked me to hold some revival meetings for them. One night during the invitation song a high-school student whom we'll call Elizabeth, who already professed to be a Christian, came forward.

But when I asked her why she came, she stammered, “Well, uh, I, I really don't know--I'm o-k with the Lord. I guess I was just moved by the sermon and the invitation song.” I asked her to talk with me for a few minutes of counseling after the meeting ended.

At that time I asked again, “Elizabeth, why did you respond? What do you want? What are you seeking?” Again she replied, “I was just touched by the sermon and singing, but everything's fine between the Lord and me.”

I happened to know that everything was not fine, but that she clearly needed to surrender several areas of her life to Christ. So I asked, “Elizabeth, please hear me carefully. Can you honestly pray this prayer? Can you sincerely say to Christ, “**Lord Jesus, I want Your Will to be done in my life – no matter what it Is, no matter what it Costs.**” Instantly her eyes dropped, and she shook her head saying, “No, I can't really say that.”

I continued, "But every new convert should be able to pray that! That's not a prayer only for advanced Christians who want to become top-notchers or missionaries. Those words express the surrender to Christ called repentance, and without repentance nobody is even saved."

Later I lost touch with her for decades. But not long ago I rejoiced to hear that she has been following and serving the Lord wholeheartedly for years. Yet as a teenager, she was struggling hard with whether she wanted to do that or not. She finally made the right decision.

What about you? Can you pray that prayer right now: "Lord Jesus, I want *Your will* to be done in my life – no matter what it *is*, no matter what it *costs*." If not, pray it NOW. He is yearning for you to say: "Your kingdom come; my kingdom go. Your good will be done in me, no matter what!"

"57 WORDS that CHANGE the WORLD"

That's the title of a book by Darrell Johnson [*not* my friend *Darren* Johnson!]-about "the Lord's Prayer." Actually the NIV uses 52 words. And by the way, this really is "the *Disciples'* Prayer." Our Lord Jesus never prayed some of these petitions; for example, He never had to pray for forgiveness. His own longest recorded prayer is in John 17. But He gave us the so-called Lord's Prayer as a guideline for our praising and praying.

So let's go back to that book-title: Do these 52 (or 57) words really change the world? Really change *our* world--yours and mine? They can, and should! As Dale Bruner says, "When we pray the Lord's Prayer we are moving the living God—who in it asks to be moved—and thus we are moving world history."

Earlier we studied the first three petitions, and saw that they are all about God--His name, kingdom and will. "We," "us" and "our" did not appear--much less "I," "me" and "mine." But in the next verses we see "us, our, us, our, we, our, us, us." And all of that is perfectly proper, if set within the context of seeking God's glory, rule and will first.

Those following requests involve our food, forgiveness, and freedom from evil forces.

Request 4: "Give us today our daily BREAD"

If you analyze this prayer, it's obvious that by "bread" our Lord means to include all physical, material necessities—including clothing, houses, and health. Some people feel we should only pray for "spiritual" matters. But Jesus mentioned bread, and put it first in the "our" department.

Dale Bruner observes, "Why should Jesus who fed his five thousand not want us to pray for our [six] billion?... Bread costs money, money requires work, work requires good government, good business, and good labor. Thus when we pray for bread we are praying at the same time for money, jobs, government, business, labor, good crops, good weather, roads, justice, and for everything economic, political, and social."

All those matters are proper and in fact important to pray about. Yet Bruner goes on to observe, "Yet note that we are **not told to pray for daily cake.**" We should pray for and be satisfied with life's necessities, not greedy for luxuries. When we have luxuries, let us be thankful. But remember those on earth who lack even the necessities. Christians should be great sharers.

William Barclay wrote, "No Christian can be content to have *too much* while others have *too little.*" And John Calvin commented that by putting the words "today" [or "this day"] and "daily" in this prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray "that we may learn to be content, and not to covet more than our need requires."

Yet today there is a **multi-billion dollar industry whose main goal is to make us *dis*-contented, *dis*-satisfied with what we have.** It aims to make us feel un-happy till we rush out and buy the products they are advertising. Our children especially are prone to have a "gimme this, gimme that - I've gotta have 'em" attitude, which especially shows itself at Christmas.

We must lovingly, firmly and wisely seek to counteract the vast materialism promoted in our culture. Not all advertising *per se* is wrong of course, but you get my drift. Wise people will think deeply on these facts, and seek to live with contentment, generosity and sacrifice.

Request 5: "FORGIVE US our debts"

The expression "our debts" reminds us that we *owe* God our worship, gratitude and obedience. We have an immense obligation to Him. And if we fail to pay Him what we owe, we need His forgiveness. We easily forget that sin is not only doing wrong but also not

doing right. We believers probably are far more guilty of sins of omission than sins of commission.

Then our Lord adds another important phrase: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." There are some people who, if they make that petition, are asking God to condemn them! Since they refuse to forgive others, in this request they ask God not to forgive them. That's scary, isn't it?

In verses 14-15, Jesus further explains this point. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But *if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*"

"I object!" protests an objector. He continues, "That statement implies we earn our salvation by our works, by the forgiveness we extend to others. But salvation cannot be earned, it is a free gift offered to sinners."

Well, that last sentence is surely correct. No way can we earn salvation. But think: For a lost sinner to be saved he must 1) believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the only Savior, who died for our sins yet rose again and is alive forever – present and active today to change us; 2) he must also repent -- change his mind and attitude toward Him. He not only believes Christ *can* forgive and change him, but he *wants* to be changed by Him! His cry is not only "Forgive my sins," but also "Deliver me from my sins." And an unforgiving attitude is one of those sins.

Okay, suppose an unconverted person asks you, "Must I forgive Mr. X in order to become a Christian?" It seems to me the reply should be as follows: "You must be willing to do what Christ says—that is, to repent of sin and trust in Him—and keep on trusting Him, not only for forgiveness but also to give you a new heart which will want to forgive others, including Mr. X. If you are *determined* not to forgive no matter what Jesus says, then you can't be saved. But (you continue) if you say, 'I know I should forgive but I can't—however, I come to You, Lord Jesus, for Your forgiveness and I also ask You for a new, forgiving heart toward others' – that is correct. You do not need to forgive everyone before becoming saved, in order to become saved. But you need to surrender your will to Messiah Jesus as your King and Lord, trusting Him to change your attitudes and actions so that you can live in obedience to His will."

We have not yet exhausted all aspects of this question, so let's continue. The "Lord's Prayer" is for His disciples—for us Christians. So what about us if we are unforgiving? Well, if any profess-

ing Christian is *determined* not to forgive others, it seems to me in light of Jesus' teaching here, that though he claims to be a Christian, he is not a genuine one--not truly saved--but instead is still a rebel! What else can we conclude when our Lord says that if anyone is unforgivING he is also unforgivEN! The very least we can conclude is that major, drastic repentance is needed!

B-u-t note that we made that statement about those who are "determined not to forgive others." On the other hand, maybe there is someone you have not forgiven (even though you want to)—for you still feel so deeply hurt, there is so much anguish because of what he or she did. But you want to forgive, you deeply desire to be rid of your anger and hate—but it seems impossible. In that case my counsel is this:

1) Realize your danger: Unforgiveness is a serious sin. 2) Look back and make a list of seven different times you have sinned--seven of your sins that have hurt your Lord and other people--and *realize what it cost Him to forgive you* (and me)! 3) Realize, and by faith claim for yourself the fact of Romans 5:5, "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." By grace we have divine resources available to enable us to obey even the hardest command. God's indwelling Spirit of love and holiness can make us what we ought to be.

4) Tell the Lord, "*I know You want me to be willing to forgive X if he/she repents. In fact you probably want me to take the initiative and offer forgiveness to him/her even if he/she does not repent. Lord, I feel I can't do that, but You can—and Your Spirit in my heart can enable me to do it. I now claim not only Rom. 5:5 but also Ephesians 4:32, 'Forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.' As I remember your incredible forgiveness of my many sins, it stirs me to forgive the wrongs that others have committed against me. Thank You, Father.*"

5) Then do what the Lord leads you to do. Circumstances differ, so not every case is exactly the same so far as confession, restitution, etc. are concerned. But remember Jesus' words back in Matt. 5:23, "...Go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" to God.

Request #6-a: LEAD Us...

Some teachers feel a comma should be inserted after "us"—and that seems helpful. For it makes this a positive request for guidance in addition to being a negative request for protection. First we ask our heavenly Father to be our Shepherd: guide us, show us the way

we should go, give us wisdom as we face decisions. The obvious implication is, Lead us—and we will follow!

Request 6-b: And lead us, NOT into Temptation, but DELIVER us from the evil one. If we sincerely ask God to forgive our sins, it is all the more fitting that we ask Him to help us not to sin. Yet the wording of this request puzzles us. Would our loving Father ever deliberately lead us into temptation, try to seduce us to do wrong? Perish the thought! But in that case, Why bother to pray, “Lead us not into temptation”?

The Greek word here translated “temptation” can also mean “test.” Darrell Johnson explains, “A test is something meant to prove a person’s character, and in the process, improve it. A temptation is meant to entice a person to sin, to bring that person down in some way... Whether it is a test or a temptation depends on *who* is behind it,” and also on *what his motive or goal is*.

The Evil One, Satan, tempts us, hoping we will fail, seeking to lure us into sin.

Our Father-God tests us, hoping we will succeed, seeking to strengthen us.

Think of a tennis coach trying to prepare his protégé for a big tournament. Will he set him up with simple shots easy to smash? Or will he run him ragged, building up his endurance and preparing him for the rigors of playing an experienced, crafty and strong opponent? The answer is obvious. In the same way, *our Captain tests us, trains us, tries to build up our endurance and skill in living loving lives – in being holy.*

William Barclay explains that the Greek word translated *temptation* usually means placing a person “in a situation in which he *may* fall, but in which he is *not meant* to fall, a situation which may be his ruin, but out of which he is meant to emerge spiritually strengthened and enriched.”

The same Greek word was sometimes used to refer to the process of refining gold. The goldsmith placed a piece of ore in his furnace to melt it so he could scoop off the impure, non-gold particles and have only pure gold left. So God puts us to the test to reveal whether we are trusting Him or not, and to refine and strengthen our trust in Him.

But as the Lord tests us, “the evil-one seeks to turn tests into temptations!” And by ourselves we are no match for him and his

wiles. Therefore, pray. As Jesus told His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Mark 14:38.)

Let us call, "Father, you know we cannot stand up under very much pressure. As You lead us to the test, as You seek to improve our faith, do not let the test become a temptation, a seduction to sin. Instead, deliver us from the subtle wiles of the deceiver against whom we are no match."

"Deliver us from the evil one." The word for *deliver* is a very strong word that could well be translated **rescue** or even **seize** or **snatch**. Barclay says, "It suggests that the evil one is constantly luring us toward his [traps] and that only the Father's constant and more powerful snatching, seizing, and rescuing can free us from destruction." For more about this important petition, see Grayson Ensign's article this month, "The Forgotten Prayer."

Now to conclude: The petitions we have just studied include every major aspect of life: our physical needs (represented by daily bread), our spiritual needs (forgiveness of sins) and our moral needs (deliverance from evil). May we commit each area to the Lord, and trust Him to meet our needs.

Martin Luther said that he went to bed with the Lord's Prayer's 5th petition and woke up with the 6th petition. At day's end it is fitting to ask, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." As a new day starts, ask "Lead us -- not into temptation but snatch us from evil and the evil one." Reviewing the entire Lord's Prayer, Dale Bruner says "it stretches from the Father at the beginning to the devil at the end, and in between it embraces in six brief petitions everything of importance in life."

May we live this prayer—trusting our caring Heavenly Father, but also obeying Him—for Father is the King. May our kingdom go and His kingdom come—in our hearts, and in the world.

Nuggets on the Lord's Prayer from Other Writers

Why Bother to Pray at all?

God already knows how we feel and what we need. We don't inform Him of anything He isn't already aware of. So *why pray?*

Here is Charles Gore's answer: "God is our Father and He wishes us to be trained in habits of conscious communication with Him. Therefore, as many blessings which God wishes to give us are made dependent on our working for them, so many other blessings are made dependent on our regular asking. God wills to give them, but He wills to give them only if we ask Him. This is so that the very necessity of continually communicating with a personal God may train us in the habit of realizing that we are children of our heavenly Father." [adapted]

Regarding the Lord's Prayer:

"The vitality of prayer lies largely in the vision of God that prompts it. Drab thoughts of God make prayer dull." -J. I. Packer, in *I Want to Be a Christian*.

Regarding "Our Father in heaven"

"When the Creator is said to be 'in heaven' the thought is that he exists on a different *plane* from us, rather than in a different *place*. He is free from all the limitations, inadequacies, and flaws that are found in earthly parents. [Yet the fact] that God in heaven is always near to his children on earth is something which the Bible takes for granted throughout." -Packer

"Your kingdom come"

"God in sovereignty overrules the lives and doings of all men, including those who deliberately defy and disobey him. But this overruling is a different thing from God's reign of grace in the heart and life of one who bows in penitent trust before his authority. God's kingdom is not a place, but rather a relationship. It exists wherever men enthrone Jesus as master of their lives." -Packer

"Your will be done"

"God's will here means two things, *his purpose for events* and *his command to his people*. In relation to the former, 'Thy will be done' expresses the spirit of meekness, which accepts without complaining whatever God sends, or fails to send. In relation to the lat-

ter, we are asking God to teach us all that we should do, and make us both willing and able for the task." --Packer

"...on earth as it is in heaven"

Why did Jesus add this phrase? "For two reasons. First, he wants at this point to arouse *hope*.

The chaos of earth mocks the petition; by reminding us, however, that God has already established his will perfectly in heaven, Jesus stirs us to hope that on earth we may yet see great things. Jesus' second aim is to awaken *praise*. While petition exhausts us, praise invigorates, and for Jesus to interpose between two spells of arduous petition a moment to pause and praise—"in heaven, Father, your will *is* done! Hallelujah"—is the spiritual equivalent of refreshment at half-time, whereby strength for the battle of intercession is renewed. *Praising energizes and renews praying.* --Packer

THE FORGOTTEN PRAYER

By Grayson Ensign

Prayer is utterly important in the life of the Christian. It is essential as we look at the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though in intimate fellowship with His Father, yet He was praying to God constantly, even all night.

Christ also taught a parable to show us that we should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1). Still many of us find it hard to pray, even harder to pray the prayer our Master taught.

Because our Lord gave this prayer it has been called "The Lord's Prayer." But it is more accurately designated as the "Children's Prayer." It is prayed to "Our Father" because Christians are adopted children of God.

This precious and powerful prayer is seldom prayed among Christians alone or in their congregational worship events. Surely we lose so much by not using the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ given in response to the earnest request of the disciples. Our worship is so much weaker as we substitute uninspired words to talk to our Father. Perhaps a major reason for the neglect of the Children's Prayer among Churches of Christ/ Christian Churches is our prejudice against liturgical forms as used by certain churches. (Our unwritten ones are acceptable!) Such a view may cause us to "throw the baby out with the bath."

But this is not a valid reason for neglecting this most significant prayer our master ever taught us to pray. When everyone in the congregation prays together this prayer, it can have profound meaning and powerful effects.

The Gettysburg Address is celebrated as one of the most succinct and powerful statements ever uttered in a few words, but our Lord outdid Abraham Lincoln in His dynamic and perfect prayer of only sixty-eight words! The quintessence of all prayer is set forth in these six grand petitions. Sometimes these petitions are made the basis of a sermon or a series of sermons, and that practice is to be commended.

An Overlooked Petition

I heard one of our outstanding preachers expounding on the Lord's Prayer at a North American Christian Convention, and it was thrilling to hear him draw out the meaning, depth and power of these words of Jesus.

Then a startling thing happened! As I eagerly looked forward to a powerful application of the great sixth petition with its urgent request for spiritual victory, the preacher simply skipped over the whole petition-- "and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one"--and ended up with the closing doxology!

I could not believe my ears, but I have come to the conviction that this is typical of the treatment that this sixth petition receives from most preachers. The noted and scholarly D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his superb two volumes on the Sermon on the Mount offers *32 pages* of exposition of the Lord's Prayer, but *only 36 lines* to the forgotten petition -- "and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one!"

Our master did not place the sixth petition as a postscript or a footnote to this perfect pattern of prayer. Instead He gave it equal weight with the other five requests. There is no reason to assume that it is not as important as any of the other supplications. Why, then, do we neglect to pray this petition or to preach about it?

Do you suppose that the evil one identified in the petition might be the source of our failure to pray this prayer? Does he fear the results of this prayer in the lives of Christians who are tempted constantly by the subtle or stunning attacks of the devil? I believe this is highly probable. Every day we need all the protection and authority of God in our lives to overcome temptation and evil. Not to pray this petition is to become more defenseless in the war against Satan.

"What war are you talking about?" may well be the response of many Christians because the overwhelming majority of Christians are ignorant that they are in spiritual warfare constantly. The arch-deceiver has removed that important truth from our thinking, our study and our preaching.

The *forgotten passage* is Ephesians 6:12: "For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies--the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world" (*Living Bible*).

But many don't want to hear about the devil and his demonic powers in their active working against us today. "It is scary, dis-comforting and might upset some church members. So let's ignore the devil and his evil spirits, and they will go away. For that matter, isn't it true that they are found only in mission fields in Africa, Asia, etc.? We Americans don't have to deal with them."

Because of ignorance, we have a multitude of Christians suffering defeats in their personal lives and in their families. They do not know the enemy nor his clever snares, his sly temptations, his subtle strategies. Nor do they know how to use the complete armor God has provided for our victory over Satan. Therefore they fall into sin and often fall away from the Lord Jesus Christ. Others cripple and stumble along in their lives feeling miserable, inadequate, and stunted in their spiritual life.

An Unused Resource

Paul emphasizes the essential element of prayer in our spiritual warfare. After depicting the victorious armor of God, he says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

Surely this brings us back to that forceful prayer of our Master for protection: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." Are many of us falling into sin and being overpowered by the devil because we do not ask for divine protection? "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

Christians need to pray this sixth petition with all fervency because every day we or our loved ones are joined in battle with the forces of darkness. Daily is the order of the Children's Prayer, for every petition is vital for each day's activities.

If *daily bread* is to be prayed for, how much more vital to pray for daily spiritual victory through Christ? Try it for yourself and experience the truth that this prayer is indeed one of the divinely powerful weapons of our warfare for the destruction of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4).

When we begin praying the Children's Prayer *from the heart*, especially with others, we will be amazed at the notable transformations in our lives, homes and congregations. And please don't skip the sixth petition-- "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one"--for our Father will marvelously answer your prayer!

--This originally appeared, years ago, in *Christian Standard*.
Brother Ensign has since gone to be with the Lord.

Grim Reminders of our Wily, Wicked Foe

A.V.W.

"The EVIL ONE": This expression is used 12 times altogether in the NIV and ASV, though other versions sometimes render it simply "evil," and use "evil one" only 5 or 9 times. Here are seven of the 12 times the NIV uses it:

Matt 6:13, *Deliver us from the evil one.*

Matt 13:19, When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, *the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart*

John 17:15, My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you *protect them from the evil one.*

Eph 6:16, Take up the shield of *faith*, with which *you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

2 Thes 3:3, The Lord is faithful, and *he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*

1 John 5:18-19, We know that *anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.* 19 We know that we are children of God, and that *the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

Is it Wrong to Think Through and Compose Public Prayers?

Well, it's not wrong for a preacher to carefully prepare before he presents God's Word to us. So why would it be wrong for a prayer-leader to prepare his words before presenting them to God? Richard Ramsey once startled me when he said, "Anglicans pray the thoughtful, beautiful prayers in their *Book of Common Prayer*, and we fault them because 'they just pray formal prayers, repeating them often throughout the year.' But every time Brother Jones leads in prayer in our services he repeats the same hackneyed phrases. You know what he's going to say before he starts. Frankly, if I have to choose, I'd rather follow their prayer-book than hear Brother Jones say the same old thing for the umpteenth time." Hmmm; makes you think, doesn't it?

Obviously our public praying should be sincere, and the person praying should not try to impress people by his fluency or learning or doctrinal expertise. That was Jesus' main point in Matt. 6:1,5. Their motivation was to "be seen [or heard] by men," and that's always a temptation. Whoever leads the congregation in public prayer should think of the God he is praying to more than of the people he is praying for. Don't be a show-off, Jesus teaches us.

But sometimes it's helpful to compose a prayer (whether a public or private one), and while that is not essential, of course, neither is it wrong. And if done humbly and spiritually it could help elevate the level of our meetings! Also we can be sure that it's not wrong for a congregation to use a prayer book, repeating together its prayers from time to time, because *that's what the Book of Psalms was—and is!*

Here's a suggestion you might consider far-out. But it could be an excellent spiritual exercise. Have the members of your Bible class study some psalms or other prayers in Scripture. Then one week, preferably after letting them know ahead of time, give each person a pencil and paper. Let each one try writing out a prayer or meditation or "psalm" (song-words?) of some kind. At the end anyone who's willing (no one should be forced) could share their prayer with the group. Most may prefer not to read or pray it with the others, and that's fine. Betcha they'd still learn more from their attempts than they do from most classtimes! Encourage them to try to complete their prayer at home (or to start all over again). Anyone who wanted to, could share it with the group the next week. But no one should be pressured to do so.

Does God Answer Prayer?

Shirley Taylor cried to God for a break. Keeping her four young children and her father-in-law, who was unable to care for himself, was exhausting, and she literally begged God for the chance to go out to dinner with her husband. "McDonald's—even White Castle would have been fine," she said.

Her husband, David, came home from work a couple of days later and said his manager had told him to do a little more entertaining with his clients—and to be sure to include his wife. Not only was Shirley given some badly needed evenings away at some really nice restaurants, but the business even paid for their meals and the baby-sitter!

--From the book, *When God Answers Prayer*, by Bob Russell, former minister at Southeast Christian Church. A number of our readers know Shirley Schreiner Taylor, daughter of Ed and Lorraine Schreiner and graduate of Portland Christian High School.

3 Bible-Sellers Slain in Turkey In Latest Attack on Christians

By Benjamin Harvey, Associated Press, April 19, 2007

[This item and comments were forwarded by Ray Downen of Joplin, MO.]

ISTANBUL, April 18 -- Assaultants on Wednesday slit the throats of three employees of a publishing house that distributes Bibles, the latest in a series of attacks targeting Turkey's small Christian minority.

The attack added to concerns in Europe about whether the predominantly Muslim country -- which is bidding for membership in the European Union -- can protect its religious minorities.

The three victims, a German and two Turks, were found with their hands and legs bound at the Zirve publishing house in the southeastern city of Malatya.

Police detained four men, ages 19 to 20, and a fifth suspect was hospitalized after jumping out of a window in an attempt to escape arrest, authorities said. All five were carrying a letter that read: "We five are brothers. We are going to our deaths," according to the state-run Anatolia news agency.

"This is savagery," said Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The assault was the latest in a string of attacks on Turkey's Christian community, which makes up less than 1 percent of the population. In February 2006, a Turkish teenager shot a Roman Catholic priest to death as he prayed in his church, and two other priests were attacked later that year. Early this year, a suspected nationalist killed Armenian Christian editor Hrant Dink.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrat party, which opposes Muslim Turkey's membership in the European Union, said Wednesday's attack showed the country's shortcomings protecting religious freedom. "The Turkish state is still far from the freedom of religion that marks Europe. It is the task of the Turkish government to guarantee this freedom of religion," the party's general secretary, Ronald Pofalla, said in a statement.

Online Responses: The question is, where is the outrage? I am saddened that the world, especially the USA media, sees Muslim martyrs with a large "M" and Christian martyrs with a small "m". -- Ricky Davis

Ray Downen: Where IS the outrage? 3 newspapers are found to have printed the news on back pages. I saw nothing about it in the Joplin newspaper.... Is it not news if the victims are Christians? Where IS the outrage?.... As writer Daniel Pulliam wondered aloud at Getreligion.org, "What would the news coverage look like if three Muslims were found with their throats slit in an Islamic publishing house . . .?" One can only imagine.

Lessons from the Farm (10)

Bob Yarbrough

I live on a farm. This shall be the last lesson as I think ten seems to be a nice round number. In this series of stories I have shared many experiences with you about our life on the farm. In the fifth installment I told you how my father passed away two weeks before we were to move to the country. Dad had planned to live with us, and we had made great preparations for the big event. What was to be a happy occasion (we thought) turned out to be a tremendous sorrow as we moved into a big house without him to share it with us. The Lord had other plans for him and that was OK with us because Dad belonged to Jesus Christ. However, that left us with a rather large house for the two of us – certainly much more than we needed. As we made the funeral plans for Dad, we were reminded that the Lord would show us how we should best utilize the farm,

but some decisions had to be made: should we move or stay; if we stayed, how should we utilize the place? We believe the Lord led us to stay, and as they say, "the rest is history." For ten years we have lived in our present location. If you have followed this series, you have read of some of our experiences – especially with animals, but our lesson this time is personal. This article seems a fitting close to ten years of lessons from the farm, and I have enjoyed sharing some of our experiences with you.

The point of this essay is to illustrate how to purposefully utilize the things God has given us for his glory and how to bless others along the way. All that any of us have, and all that we ever hope to be, is because of His grace and mercy to us -- not anything we do can ever merit His favor (Eph. 2:8-10). Everything we have has been entrusted to us by a loving and gracious God to be used for His glory. Since the Lord chose to give us a farm, we needed to make some decisions as to how best to use it for His glory. We chose to utilize the place as often as possible as an extension of our hospitality to our family, our church family, and to our friends (1 Tim. 3:2). In the process we have a lot of great memories of good times together at the farm with a lot of people – especially with the grandkids. From summer "Cousins Camp" to church picnics to extended lodgings to family birthday dinners, the Lord has allowed us to build a wealth of memories, and to be a blessing to others along the way.

I share this with you not to boast, but to make a point about utilizing the blessings that the Lord has given. God has allowed us to use the farm for His glory, and we thank Him for the privilege. Your gifts may be entirely different. You may be able to prepare meals for the shut-ins, or teach a Bible class, or telephone the sick, or call upon recent visitors to your church. You may be able to chauffeur someone to the grocery store, or to the worship services of your church. You may be able to write to missionaries or servicemen in distant countries. You may be able to greet or visit people well, or pass out church literature, or clean the church building. Everyone can pray. You may be blessed financially so that you can give liberally to the Lord's work. If tithes and offerings were required of God's people in the Old Testament, what do you suppose should be our response in this day of grace? The utilization of God's blessings is endless. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father" (*for the privilege*) -- Colossians 3:17. What has God given you? Are you using it for His glory?

There is a beautiful story recorded in Exodus 36:1-7 that amazes me every time I read it. In fact, I have written "Wow!" in the margin of my Bible beside this story. While in the wilderness after leav-

ing Egypt Moses was in the process of having the tabernacle constructed by craftsmen. God had blessed certain people with "skills and abilities to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary just as the Lord commanded" (36:1). Notice that the Lord gave them these talents to use in His service. Likewise, today the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to believers as He determines (1 Cor. 12:4-5, 11). So Moses sent out the word for people to bring their gifts for the construction of the tabernacle. With enthusiasm the people brought their gifts, so much in fact that the workers told Moses there was more than enough to finish. They said, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done" (36:5). These people were using their gifts for the glory of God. At that point Moses had to restrain the people from bringing their gifts (36:6). Can you imagine that! The obvious applications today do not even need to be mentioned. The grace of giving is a gift from God, and the work of the Lord needs your generous gifts to operate effectively. We should be as likeminded as the Israelites were in Moses' day. But how about other graces as well – the gifts, talents, skills, and abilities that God has given us? How are they being utilized? God has been so generous with all of the good gifts He has given us (Matt. 7:11). Honesty requires that we be responsible in these matters since there is still so much to be done.

Ephesians 2:8-10 already has been cited above. The older I get, the more I have fallen in love with this passage of scripture. I am nothing, I can do nothing, nor will I ever be able to do anything to merit the grace that God has given me through Jesus Christ. He has done it all, so I simply accept it by the faith that He has given me. I am awestruck with that thought! But the more I think about what He has done in verses 8 and 9, the more I realize how important verse 10 is to my own spiritual growth and walk with the Lord. I am His workmanship; He has fashioned and created me to work for Him. Today, we are His hands and feet. We are the jars of clay that contain the treasure of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6-7). And the wonder of it all is that even before the foundations of the earth, God already had planned work for me to do when I entered this earth in time and space. Everything I am to do for Him was planned in advance. I wonder how much I have left undone. I don't know how much longer the Lord has in store for us (for that matter, none of us do), but we are trying to honor the Lord at the farm as long as we reside here. This is my personal Lesson from the Farm. Since God has planned our work in advance, let's get on with it. Did I hear you say that you don't know what your work might be? Ask Him, because He knows. He planned it. You are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Thanks for staying with me during this series. I have cited many scripture references throughout these lessons, so I hope the reader

will take the time to research them. I appreciate the invitation from the editor to share these experiences with you. May God bless you as you seek to do His Will (Eph. 5:16-17). Jesus said that the people who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness will be given everything else they need (Matt. 6:33).

[Note by the editor: We give hearty thanks to brother Bob for his series of down-home-on-the-farm analogies. They've made us think and thank God as well as smile.

Just as his columns were reaching an end, out of the blue came another writer, Janis Spicer, with some thought-provoking musings. Though she's my niece, I never knew of her knack for writing till the funeral of Kenneth Preston (her dad). At that time Julius Hovan read her two-page meditations and memories of her father. (It appeared in *W&W* afterward.) Later Julius was also impressed with her term-paper in the S.B.S. class he taught in Danville. At my invitation Janis sent me two reflections, and we look forward to others as well. She also recently began writing the bulletin for Bohon Church; plus spearheading the start of something new -- a monthly newsletter for 5 sister churches in central Kentucky: Bohon, Cramer, Ebenezer, Mackville and Parksville. -avw]

Bad Day at Work?

Janis Preston Spicer

I have spent most of my working career as a paralegal. A friend of mine who has also been a paralegal for many years once described the job as "doing the same work as a lawyer for a whole lot less pay and absolutely none of the glory." Most days I like both my job and my boss, but not every day.

My daddy used to say, "It was just Monday all day long." Boy, do I know what he meant! The phone rings off the hook all day. Clients parade in and out one right after another. Everybody thinks his problem is the single most important thing you could possibly have on your desk. The boss hands you something, comes back in three minutes with instructions to quit that thing and get this one done, and five minutes later wants to know why you haven't finished the first one yet. The copier breaks down, the printer jams up, the computer crashes. You spend thirty minutes hunting for a file the boss asks for only to discover that it was lying right there on his desk the whole time. And at the end of the day, when you've managed to fix all the machines, find the lost file, soothe the agitated clients, and finish both priority jobs, all you want to hear from the boss is one

sincere "thank you". But instead what you get is, "Tomorrow, let's see if you can get some work done around here!"

Yes, sometimes there are days when I just want to dump that stack of files right in the middle of his desk and walk out, never to return.

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." (Colossians 3:23-24). "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17).

And *that* is why I will get up in the morning and go back to work again, even though today I don't much like my job. Because this is the job that God has given me to do and He expects me to do it well, whether my boss appreciates it or not. And so that, when I get to heaven, I can *finally* hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

VOICES from the FIELDS

Mark Garrett

Senegal, West Africa

June 10, 2007

Thanks so much for the way you have been backing us up in your crucial role as our prayer supporters! We do see God's hand at work in our lives every day. In the past few weeks we have been working through some issues where we need your focused prayer once again.

A missionary orthopedic doctor here in Senegal examined our daughter, Kathryn, and is recommending that we take her to the US for further evaluation and treatment for a back problem. So, Candy and Kathryn are flying to Kentucky to stay with my parents, Cecil and Betsy Garrett, and will pursue the doctor appointments and treatment that the Lord leads us to. They plan to arrive June 14. The current plan is for them to stay for 2 months and return to Senegal in time for school to start in mid August at Dakar Academy.

One complicating factor for *our family* is that we are in the process of moving from Thies to Dakar. And *our Thies office* is doing the same thing in the same month! These moves will have to happen before Candy and Kathryn return. (But we can count our blessings in the midst of such a challenge because God has provided in His

own time an adequate house near to school and to our new office at a reasonable rent. PTL!)

It is normally a daunting task to move [and more so without Candy to organize it]. It will also challenge me as I care for Bryan Ethan and Arne without Candy to just organize the home. But our co-workers are pitching in to help and so we praise God for them. It is so good to work on a team of precious brothers and sisters!

So thanks for praying with us through these things. We really want to find the best treatment for Kathryn and we need wisdom in the big decisions. We also need strength in our moving as we prepare one house and office to move into and clean up the ones we are moving out of. Just the transfer of utility billing can take an incredible amount of time. So we'll be learning patience lessons again and need God's grace through it all.

May God build our faith as we see how He answers and provides though this challenging time!

--B.P. 274, Thies, SENEGAL Ph: 221-951-1737 Cell:221-637-9482 Please reply to: ark.garrett@sim.org;

David Moldez Manila, Philippines April 26, 2007

We thank the Lord for the Central Bible Seminary thanksgiving and alumni homecoming. At least 150 present and former students came during the event. Below is a letter we read that day from Ahmor Orr (a graduate who is a missionary in England with her husband and 2 daughters). She wrote: *My student years in CBI were precious years for me. Being a new Christian when I started, I was so hungry to learn. I was growing spiritually and was excited to discover new things about God and His word. Subjects like Doctrines, Church History, OT and NT surveys and Missions had a great impact on my life. I was totally captivated and completely sold out to God after that. I wanted to make a difference and I would say that the desire to go into mission work first happened when I was at CBI.*

I have been on the mission field now (with Operation Mobilisation) for over 18 years.... I can truly say that my CBI years were great preparations for me for the mission field and I will always remember my CBI years with a warm feeling in my heart. To all the staff, thank you for your Godly example to me, your dedication and love for God. You are all doing a good job in the kingdom of God.
Ahmor Orr

We thank the Lord for more than 100 students and the 24 Graduates in different courses this year ['06-07]. We praise God for those who prayed and supported CBS teaching and training ministry so that more disciples of Christ can study God's word systematically and be better prepared for ministry.

Last January and February funds came that enabled us to pay a very big deficit that had accumulated. We rejoiced and testified of God's faithfulness. However this March only 2/3 of the amount needed by the school came, so we wondered how to pay the expenses for the coming graduation. The Lord was teaching us to keep on praying and "sacrifice" more for Him. That month an anonymous donor gave a large gift. We do not know who he or she is.

So there are many reasons to rejoice in spite of struggles as we advance the kingdom of God. Al Almeror, one of the graduates this year is already preaching the word of God. His testimony is very powerful as he is a former prisoner. Last March, they have a youth camp with more than 700 youth attending. Al is one of the organizers and counselors, and at least 7 CBS students joined him to minister to the youth. Many received the Lord and were baptized.

Since January too, at least 30 people were baptized through other students and alumni that I closely worked with. By the grace of God, 4 area churches that we started are growing and two are struggling to grow. We are also helping another church planting work at Bulacan (south of Manila). The couple who went to that place are also CBS alumni. After 6 months, a group of believers started to meet under the tree. Yesterday we discussed the possibility of renting a house there so that new believers can start to congregate every Sunday. This summer we are able also to conduct Vacation Bible School at Novaliches with more that 300 children and youth attending. This has stretched to the limit the fund of the church.

Please pray for us. Enemies' attack is also strong. Two weeks ago a young people was possessed by an evil spirit. I got a scratch when the spirit became violent. Praise God that the girl was delivered. She even assisted during the VBS.

JUNE 7: We just concluded local elections here in the Philippines. Generally it was peaceful and orderly. We did a whole-day prayer chain in the church at Novaliches by applying 2 Chron. 7:14.

CBS enrollment has started. We are again excited as former students started to return and several new ones are registering. I have requested a one year leave but no one is available to take the administrative work at the moment.

Pressing On

Roy H. Mays III

“How do you keep going?” That question has been asked in various ways numerous times during my eight years of responding to the challenge of multiple myeloma cancer. After two stem-cell transplants at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, extensive chemotherapy treatments at the Lexington Cancer Center, experimental programs at the Dana-Farber Cancer Center in Boston, and now daily medications to fight the increase in cancer activity while adjusting to the side-effects, I can say that sometimes I want to quit. Not in regard to my faith, but concerning the stress and struggle of the race. There are new issues with blood clots, the fractures in my back now total ten, and even walking is tough. It has been a long journey. So how have I persevered?

Writing on this topic as requested has given me an occasion to reflect back on those eight years and to see how God has worked in me and through me to understand perseverance. As I reflect on what God is teaching me, I can see that it is possible to remain faithful, even though fatigued; mainly because His grace is fresh each day. My intent is to share with you some insights and stories that will stimulate you to endure your difficulties and face your crises. These are some of the principles and practices that I have used to keep pressing on.

1. Emulate His Example.

What did Jesus do to remain faithful to his purpose? What does that mean for us? Look at Luke 22:42-43; 1 Peter 2:20-24; 5:5-10; and Hebrews 12:1-3. Those passages show that Jesus entrusted the situation to His Father, and He endured His struggle through God's strength. He did this to win our salvation, and to give us encouragement so that we would not lose heart in our race, no matter what we were facing.

2. Embrace His Grace

On the day following my diagnosis of cancer in 1997, God gave me a metaphor, a railroad track, to help me see that His grace was sufficient, like two rails of a track. It is now called the H and D Railroad Track. One rail represented healing; and the other dealing. This came while I was meditating on Paul's request concerning his thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. In God's purpose and providence, I like Paul, was to embrace His grace and to accept that God does work all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28-39). Through Him we are more than conquerors.

Sometimes when persons are going through a time of testing they try to go down only one rail of the track. They give their situation to God and ask for healing, but do not want to go through any processes themselves. Others think that they can do the adjacent rail only, but forget that it is the Great Physician that brings true healing. My doctors remind me that they can only put me in a position to get well, but they cannot do that for me, it is in God's hands. If you do not go down both rails of the track at the same time, you will wreck. In other words, there is a place for us to pray and there is a time for us to take the prescriptions when appropriate. To receive His dealing grace we ask in prayer believing and we invite others to join with us (Philippians 4:11-13). When people ask why I am still here, my response is generally because of people's prayers, physicians' pills, and God's providential purpose. Maybe I should add my commitment to persevere. Sometimes I humor folks a little with the comment, "You keep praying and I will keep popping." Underlying that thought is my commitment to keep on embracing the grace of God each day to help me run the race laid out for me. Without perseverance and planning along with the other parts of prayer and pills, the race is over.

3. Listen to Godly Counsel.

Some of the best help has come from my family, especially my wife Beth. She has encouraged me so much to stay in the game, even when I was at peace with going on to heaven. At one point during the very difficult time of chemotherapy, I was thinking about the joy of heaven and the people with whom I would be reunited. Of course, she was pleased that I would go there, but she did not want me to go prematurely if the Lord willed otherwise. So she made this gentle statement: "You are so ready for heaven, you are not much help down here." And she was right. There was more for me to do with my life, my family, my church family, the community family, and the world family. So I should seek to know what that would be and then do it with God's grace as long as He let me run the race.

Several months later I was preparing a lesson on how a leader leaves a legacy that will last from 2 Timothy 2:1-2. We often emphasize verse two, but the grace strength in verse one is crucial. While embracing grace we relay our faith to persons who will carry the torch long after our time is over. During the lesson I asked this question that the Lord had prompted me with during my preparation the day before: "If I increase your impact and expand your influence for Christ, but it may shorten your life, would you take the deal?" That question not only motivated me to stay faithful in a reproducing and multiplying ministry, but it also brought others into the process when they heard me raise the point in subsequent times of testimony and teaching. Beth invited me to choose some of those

hungry persons and invest more time in mentoring them so that what God had done through the years would be passed on to them so that they could then touch others.

4. Learn from Past Experiences.

When I performed my first wedding ceremony, it was for my brother Kent and his wife to be, Cheryl. When doing the vows, they were to repeat after me, "with all of my heart's affection." Instead, I said, "with all of my heart's infection." They said it correctly, even though I had made a mistake that was pointed out to me after the wedding. Infection has been a problem for me for many years, and the cancer just followed a number of other physical issues that have plagued me through the years.

During the wedding ceremony for Beth and me on June 9, 1973, while speaking after our vows where we committed that we would stay with each other in sickness and in health, Charles Stiles emphasized that "in any affair of the heart there must of necessity be a Calvary. There cannot be a giving of one's self without some pain. In the days when you're hurt, you're sick, when you are lonely and nothing works out properly, I pray that you will remember the love of this moment."

Beth and I subsequently attended a seminar led by Dr. Samuel Southard at Christ Hospital in Cincinnati that further prepared us to keep our vows. His point in one session was that the key to marriage was memory. He took us to 1 Corinthians 13 and talked about faith, hope and love. Faith related to the past, hope regarded the future, and love helped us respond in the present. Building memories of seeing where God was faithful to us and we were faithful to each other would be a foundation for building our lives and our marriage. That would give us hope for the future because we would remember how God had been there for us, how we had been there for each other, and regardless of what was ahead, we could live in hope. That would then produce more love and perseverance for the present day. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:7: "...love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Beth has spoken several times during the trials that God has protected me on several occasions, and she believed that He would continue to do so. Her memory of past experience has encouraged me to keep running.

5. Remember that Hope Helps.

When Paul speaks of hope four times in Romans 15:1-13, he notes that some of the sources of hope are the Scriptures, the songs of the united church, and the Holy Spirit. They all are designed to help us find what God intends us to enjoy: encouragement and en-

duration (verses four and five). You have heard of the acrostic on Hope that says "He Offers Everlasting Peace." I would add Helps to Hope and emphasize in my own acrostic on Helps that He Extends Love and Perseverance Strength. He gives me the spiritual power to carry on. When you have eternal hope your destination is set and your victory is secure, all you have to do is remain faithful to Christ and His mission for you. That makes the race more manageable. It also fuels you for the journey. Recycling that hope to other people then has energized me, as well. As Proverbs 11:25b indicates, "he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." As I have sought to recycle grace to others who were hurting, I found the help I needed to keep pressing on. One couple in the horse industry who heard me speak of Healing and Dealing, then named their new colt, "Hope and Cope." That is what you and I can determine to do. We choose to keep hope alive and determine to cope with our challenges through the empowering grace of God.

At one point during the difficult time of chemotherapy and preparation for the transplant, I did have a few moments of despair. So when speaking to my family about this, and acknowledging that this was going to be hard to endure, I made a commitment with this expression: "I am doing it for the grandchildren." Of course, neither of my children were married at the time, and are not now eight years later, but I was thinking of the future generations that would come. For them I wanted to set an example, give them a testimony of a Christian's credibility while going through crisis, and use this as a teachable moment for all that would be checking to see if my faith was real. Faith, hope and love were real to me then, and are true now. God has given me opportunities to witness of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in sharing the gospel with people that were around me being tested with medical issues, I have helped them find eternal life that will give them heaven later and help now.

6. Recognize the Model of the Marathoner.

Last year my sister-in-law and in-grace, Cheryl Mays, determined that she would run her first marathon at the age of 49 to help raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. She wanted to do this because my myeloma is a blood cancer and is in the same family as those other cancers and the research dollars that had been raised in the past provided some of the work that was needed to find a cure for multiple myeloma. (She set a Kentucky record raising over \$14,000). To prepare her for the marathon she joined a group called "Team in Training." She found that it is best for marathon running if you do it in a small community who knows you and cares for you and instructs you on how to do it right from a relational

base. On the night before the race in San Diego she had dinner with her small group, including some of her family and my wife and me. We all heard one speaker say that as you run there is a temptation to either go out too fast or too slow. Instead, one has to run at the pace that was determined in the preparation period and in doing the running at that speed, there would be a greater possibility of finishing. Cheryl did what she had prepared to do, and she completed the course.

There have been times in my cancer journey that I was too compulsive, and other times where I was too complacent. Finding the right speed required wisdom from God and from my family. Both Ryan and Amanda, my now adult children, have helped me in this process. The Southland Christian Church family has been incredible with their support, and I have let many of them serve me in their personal ways so that I could use my energy to minister to others in ways only I could do. Without what they have done for Beth and me we could not have continued to fight cancer and do family and church ministry. And Beth has been the one who as my partner on the point has continued to remind me of how I could endure the pain and persevere. At one point before a painful biopsy was to be performed on me, she wrote me a letter and included the poem by Babcock: "Be strong, we are not here to play, to dream, to drift, we have our work to do, and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle, face it, 'tis God's gift. Be strong..." Both the struggle and the strength were gifts from God. She encouraged me to endure and I have sought to do so.

When the Olympics were being held in Atlanta in 1996, I decided to buy a brick at Centennial Park and make a statement about what was important to me. Working within the guidelines and limits on the number of characters allowed, my conclusion was: "Team Roy Mays, By Grace Wins." In a context where performance was measured, I wanted to state that it is the work of Christ that really matters and it is through faith in His work on the cross and in the power of the resurrection that makes us winners in the end. After a few months of chemo in 1997, my children gave me an enlarged photo of the one we made showing all four of our family with one shoe each touching that brick. They added a plate below the photo that recounted we were "Walking in Faith, Father's Day 1997."

Perseverance is a faith journey, and it is best done if possible with a family. When Amanda and I attended the women's marathon in Los Angeles in 1984, we saw Joan Benoit enter the Coliseum to great cheers as she finished first. Much later there was another runner who attempted to complete the last lap. Her name was Gabriella Anderson Scheiss. Several times she had to avoid the medical teams

that were observing how hard it was for her to keep running, even now barely walking. (If they had touched her in any way, she would have been disqualified.) As she passed in front of us, I told Amanda who was all of six years old at the time, that she must remember that one should try to run so that you are first, but the most important lesson is to finish the race. Being faithful to the finish is its own reward.

When Paul wanted to make this point to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, he called him to imitate the fighter and the runner. In this passage you have the keys for all of us to persevere with courage for a few more minutes: fight one more round and run one more lap.

May you embrace His grace and run your race knowing that all who are faithful will win in the end. Before you get to heaven, let's extend some help and express some hope down here. Press on with perseverance!

(This was a sermon preached Dec. 1, 2004. Used by permission.)

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

Gallatin Church of Christ (Tenn) joyfully welcomes Noel & Sheila Quinn. Noel is our new minister and has begun his work with us as of Easter Sunday April 8th. The Quinns come from Kennesaw, Georgia and even now are working on finding a home here in Gallatin. Be in prayer for the Quinns, our church, our community.

From Noel: "By the grace of God, we have the chance to use our lives to participate with Him in His work in our world, especially in our Gallatin community. We believe that God has created all things with a purpose and that He is guiding the course of history to serve that purpose. We seek to show and to make known that purpose in Gallatin, together with all churches with those who profess Jesus as Lord and commit their lives to Him and to following Him. As a brief

expression of our goals, you can consider this mission logo: **Reach - Grow - Equip.**

Cypress Creek Church of Christ This church in Oakdale, LA is looking for a minister. Jerry Samples, who served there over 20 years, went to Glory last year. The congregation, which began in 1891, is "a small country church with strong family values. It is located in the central part of Louisiana. The community has always centered around the church and encouraged all to be involved. "As a congregation, we are mission minded, supporting Christian Youth Encampment, Words of Life, Church of Christ Mission, Sonny Childs Ministries, Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship, Sellersburg Children Home, and Crown and Sickie Ministries--either by church or individual contributions.

Current attendance averages 30 for Sunday Services. For more information contact Charles L. Seal: LSeal50868@aol.com Phone 318-748-8572."

"Launch Pad Louisville" (Sonny Childs) is a 2 month series of meetings in the Louisville area Churches of Christ: July 15-20: Cherry St., New Albany, Ind. July 30-Aug 2: KY-IND Fellowship (see inside front cover). Aug. 3-4: Sellersburg, Ind. Aug. 5-8: Buechel Church (Louisville). Aug. 9-12: Portland Ave. (teen VBS). Aug. 15-19: Ralph Ave. Church (Louisville). Aug. 23-25: Tell City, IN. Sept. 5-9: Sellersburg, IN.

For more information, contact: Sonny Childs, P.O. Box 131, Paragould, AR. 72451-0131. 800-973-2646. Sonnychilds.com

Ebenezer Church of Christ (Salvisa, KY) **Don McGee** held meetings there from June 24-27. That announcement fell through the cracks somehow so W&W did not get the word out in time. Very sorry about that. **David Reagan** will hold meetings there Oct. 5-7 (Fri.-Sun.) --AVW

A big Surprise at Ebenezer: Pastor Appreciation Day! On April 22 John and Deborah Kesel, much loved minister and his wife, were surprised with the gift of a car. Church members had donated money for this gift. The events were played out in a delightful manner. A birthday celebration for three members was enjoyed with a noon pot luck dinner. After that, Linda Murray gave honor to the birthday celebrants, and then began talking about outstanding members and ministers of the past. She continued with a description of their current minister preacher and his wife, of whom members all share a common belief that they are a special gift from God. John, being

humble as he is, tried to get Linda's focus back on the birthday people. "Oh!" she said, "We're through with that."

Soon other church members stood and acknowledged their appreciation for the sacrificial service of the Kesels, and a large basket of cards from members was presented to them. Then Hughes Jones said he wanted to take a picture of the group on the front steps of the church. As John and Deborah came to the front entrance of the church, their attention was directed very lovingly to a car with a big bow and several balloons attached. (John and Deborah, who teaches Woodford County elementary students, had shared one car which was sometimes inconvenient.) Needless to say, they were overwhelmed. After many tears and thanks, Delmer Odell offered a prayer of dedication that the car and driver would be safe and used to the glory of God. Pictures of the event are available on the Ebenezer web site: ebenezer-churchofchrist.net.

Report from Amite, LA "If mamas and daddys have to work 8-10 hour days, I want the kids! With 2500 sq. ft. of class rooms idling all week, and local daycares overflowing, somebody said, 'let's start a daycare!' It took us about a year to meet all the requirements, but we qualified for the state license. Now all the space is filled with children from 6 weeks old to pre-k almost 12 hours a day. We get to sing 'little boy David, Jesus loves me and tell Bible stories 5 days a week. This is a service. The budget is tight with no profit intended or expected. It has been a burden, but now is self-sustaining. If it attracts others to join us and help our efforts, then praise God. In any case the area is aware of our work and we teach kids about Jesus." - John Fulda

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Fall Schedule

<u>Classes Offered</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Time</u>
Romans / Galatians	3	Bud Ridgeway	Mon. 9:00 - 12:00
Daniel / Revelation	3	Jerry Carmichael	Mon. 1:00 - 4:00
Prison Epistles (Eph, Phil, Col. & Philemon)	3	Joe Stone	Mon. 6:30 - 9:30
New Test. Church	2	Ervin Denkins	Tues. 7:00 - 9:00
Roles of Women	2	Ruth Wilson	Tues. 6:30 - 8:30
[The above will be held at Portland Church, not Buechel.]			
Prison Epistles	3	Julius Hovan	Tues. 6:30 - 9:30
[The above class will be held in the Harrodsburg, Ky. area]			

Please Note: The above classes will be taught at the hours when needed the most by crediting students. Times may therefore be adjusted.