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In This Issue...

- **The Fruit of a Tree** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Be a Barnabas** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **Two Types Of Mental Divorce (Part 1)**
| *Patrick Donahue*
- **What Manner of Person** | *Jim Mickells*
- **But, What About Him?** | *Greg Gwin*
- **Praying Like Jesus : Prayer Principles from the Sermon on the Mount** | *William Stewart*
- **Will Christ Reign On Earth For 1000 Years?**
| *Ethan Jennings*
- **Congregational Song Leading** | *Craig Hobschaidt*
- **Do We Need Scriptural Authority?** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Gossip

*"The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body"* (Proverbs 18:8; 26:22)

The principle here stated is so important it occurs twice in Proverbs, the book of wisdom.

"Gossip is compared to junk food. It is quite tasty. Nonetheless when absorbed into the blood stream, it remains a permanent part of the person. Once absorbed, it destroys character" (Dave Bland, **The College Press NIV Commentary: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon**. 169)

Worship

"How can a man be prepared for an eternal heaven who finds the worship of God on earth irksome and tedious?" (Albert Barnes, **Notes on The Old Testament**. Psalm 27:4 [e-Sword]).

The Fruit of a Tree

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every

tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:43-45).

When I lived in Florida, I couldn't tell by their leaves and general appearance the differences between various kinds of citrus trees: orange, grapefruit, and lemon, But once they produced fruit, it was obvious which tree was which. And you can't get an orange from a lemon tree!

We live in a unicorn world, and that includes among brethren. It's make believe. Don't be negative. Don't call anyone or anything evil. We can't have negative preaching.

Did you ever read Matthew chapter 23? Seven times in the **ESV** and **NASV**, the Master scathingly denounced the scribes and Pharisees: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...” (Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). He warned His disciples against being influenced by their hypocrisy (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 12:1; 20:46-47). The Master's disciples were afraid he was being offensive (Matthew 15:12). The Lord replied:

“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:13-14).

Tobiah was an evil man who opposed the welfare of the Jews who had been restored from captivity (Nehemiah 2:10). He did all he could to prevent Nehemiah and the Jews from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah chapters 2 - 6). But some of the Jews were kin to him, influenced by him, and reported to Nehemiah the good things he did (Nehemiah 6:17-19). Regardless of friendship, kinship, and some good deeds, he was an evil man for opposing the work of the Lord through Nehemiah.

The apostle Paul exclaimed, “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!” (Galatians 5:12, **ESV**) Yes, that means exactly what it sounds like. The apostle is talking about the false teachers who wanted to circumcise the Galatians. The apostle wasn't being vindictive toward the false teachers. By being emasculated, these false teachers would be cut off from both the Jews (Deuteronomy 23:1, **NKJV**) and Christians as well, since they would be taking the appearance of the male, homosexual cult prostitutes of the idolaters.

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians:

*“For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder” (2 Corinthians 12:20, **ESV**).*

He commanded, “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned” (Titus 3:10-11).

When people are divisive, that is their fruit; that's what they are. Don't let any good deeds fool you. They are bad trees, and they bear bad fruit.

Be a Barnabas

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

We are familiar with Paul's companion in some of his travels. He is first mentioned in Acts 4:36: “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement).” What a great description of Paul's brother and companion.

He is next mentioned in Acts 9:26-27. After Paul's conversion, he sought to meet with the Jerusalem

Christians. They had heard about his persecutions, and feared this was some trick. But Barnabas came to the rescue.

"...and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus."

Another instance deals with his defense of John Mark, who had abandoned the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, but wanted to accompany them on their next trip. Paul was against this, but Barnabas disagreed. This resulted in a parting of the ways. Whatever Mark's shortcoming was, Barnabas took him under his wing and encouraged him by taking him on a preaching trip (Acts 15:38-39). Paul later changed his mind, and asked for Mark.

Thus Barnabas was an encourager, a helper and a preacher, as well. Shouldn't these words be descriptive of all preachers? Unfortunately, these words don't describe all preachers I know.

I have known preachers who seem to think they have been called to browbeat, demean and discourage those in their audience. Seldom does an encouraging word fall from their lips. This causes Christians to be discouraged, some to move to other congregations (when they can), and has caused some to abandon their faith. Of course, they must realize that at the judgment day they cannot hide behind those who have driven them away, saying "It's their fault." We come together to worship God, not man. Even in the case of Diotrephes John did not tell the members of the church to leave, but encouraged them to just do good.

"I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire [to do so,]and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God" (3 John 9-11).

Yes, preachers have to deal with sin and shortcomings from time to time. Paul had to do this in some of his epistles, but he tried to encourage along with his exhortations. There were many problems in the church at Corinth, but Paul begins his letter with "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:3-4). Then he closes the letter with "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus" (16:24). In spite of the problems they had, they knew Paul loved them.

Time and time again, Paul encourages encouragement. "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Part of being patient is to be an encourager. See also Acts 11:23, Colossians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 5:11, Titus 2:4, Hebrews 3:13. It is evident that Paul took his own advice. (Maybe he learned from Barnabas)

Preacher, you will do more to build up the church and save souls by being a Barnabas (an encourager) than by being a Diotrephes (a complainer).

Two Types Of Mental Divorce (Part 1)

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

The purpose of this article is to Biblically refute the "mental divorce" position advocated by many of our brethren in the past and today. Because some holding to the mental divorce view don't go as far as others, I usually classify the positions into two different types. Both types say (contrary to God's word) that a put away woman may remarry if her original husband commits fornication. The first type would allow that remarriage regardless of when the fornication took place. Even if the man commits fornication after he legally divorces his wife unscripturally, this position says she may remarry. The second type would not

allow the put away woman to remarry if the fornication (on the part of the man) occurred after the termination of the marriage, but would allow her remarriage only if the fornication took place before the divorce, even though she is not the one who secured the divorce.

Mental Divorce, Type I

The first type of mental divorce is defended by the following two quotes defending it: Weldon E. Warnock ("Searching the Scriptures," November, 1985):

"But someone asks: 'What about a woman who is put away (divorced) by a man simply because the man no longer wanted to be married? Fornication is not involved and the woman repeatedly tried to prevent the divorce, but to no avail. After a couple of years the man marries another woman. Is the 'put way' woman then free to marry?' She certainly is, if she puts away her husband for fornication. She would have to do this before God in purpose of heart (see why we call it "mental" divorce? - ptd) since the divorce has already taken place, legally speaking. She could not go through the process of having a legal document charging her husband with 'adultery,' but God would know"

Ron Halbrook (1986 document):

"But if he commits adultery (before or after his action in the courts of man), there is something else to be said by divine law-by the moral and spiritual law of the court of God. She now may put away, reject, or divorce him as a moral and spiritual act."

Luke 16:18

The above positions are clearly contradicted by Luke 16:18 which reads "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" This verse envisions a man, let's call him Fred, who puts away his wife Ethel unlawfully (not for fornication), and then marries Jane. The verse goes on to say it is adultery if someone marries Ethel at this point, after Fred has put her away, and even after Fred has remarried and committed adultery "against" (Mark 10:11) Ethel. This is the exact scenario that our brethren Warnock and Halbrook are defending in their quotes above. Let me make it clear that this isn't the only scenario Luke 16:18b condemns, but if it condemned only one scenario, the Warnock/Halbrook scenario would be it.

Matthew 19:9 For Fornication

Next let's focus in on the "for fornication" option implied by Matthew 19:9a. It would imply "Whosoever shall put away his wife, for fornication, and shall marry another, doth not commit adultery." So for a man to be able to remarry (after divorce) without committing adultery, three things must be true:

1. his first wife must have committed fornication
2. he must have put away that wife
3. fornication must have been the reason he put away (divorced) his wife

Repeating condition #2, the man must have been the one to put away his wife, not the other way around. This contradicts Mr. Warnock's and (my personal friend) Ron's position which says the man may remarry (as long as his previous wife commits fornication somewhere along the way), even if he was not the one to actually secure the divorce. Some only want to emphasize the cause for divorce, but Jesus emphasizes the cause and who does the putting away.

Matthew 19:9 Four Categories

I've heard more than one preacher correctly break Matthew 19:9 down into four categories of people:

1. The one who puts away their spouse for fornication does not commit adultery when they remarry.
2. The one who puts away their spouse for a reason other than fornication commits adultery when they remarry.
3. The one who is put away by their spouse for fornication commits adultery when they remarry.
4. The one who is put away by their spouse for a reason other than fornication commits adultery when

they remarry.

Our brothers Warnock and Halbrook are defending a person who falls into category #4, one who God says commits adultery (Luke 16:18b).

Fornication Alone Does Not Break The Bond

We all agree if a man cheats on (commits fornication against) his wife, that the marriage bond does not terminate at the point of that fornication. No, the wife has the option of divorcing her husband for fornication (Matthew 5:32). But she may decide to stay with her husband. In that case, the marriage bond would then remain intact. So we all agree it is not fornication by itself that breaks the marriage bond; it is divorce for the cause of fornication that breaks the bond. But the Warnock/Halbrook position says a woman's bond with her previous husband is broken, simply based upon the fact her previous husband has committed fornication, even though she didn't divorce him for that fornication (instead, he divorced her).

Two Ways To Break The Bond

The Bible only gives two ways the marriage bond can be broken (leaving a person free to remarry without committing adultery):

1. Romans 7:2-3 the death of the spouse
2. Matthew 19:9 the divorce of the spouse for fornication

Neither of the above has occurred with respect to the woman of the Warnock/Halbrook scenarios. Her husband has not died. And she has not divorced her husband for fornication; instead, he has divorced her. If Fred divorces Ethel and marries Jane, Ethel is still bound/obligated to Fred, therefore she is not free to remarry without committing adultery (Romans 7:2-3).

They Are "Put Away"

The Warnock/Halbrook scenario justifies a "put away" woman remarrying, but Jesus said three times marrying a put away woman results in adultery (the reason is because she is still bound/obligated to her former husband, Romans 7:2-3):

1. Matthew 5:32b "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery"
2. Matthew 19:9b "whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"
3. Luke 16:18b "whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery"

Some teach as if it doesn't matter who gets the divorce. Well according to Jesus, it makes a big difference who gets the divorce! Jesus describes one spouse as doing the putting away and the other spouse as the one who is put away. The one who is doing the putting away may remarry scripturally if the putting away was for the cause of fornication. The one being put away may not remarry scripturally no matter what the cause for the divorce was.

Reversing God's Order

The first type of mental divorce is reversing God's order. The Baptist does this when he puts salvation in front of baptism in reverse of the order given by Jesus in Mark 16:16. The Warnock/Halbrook position allows remarriage to occur even if the divorce occurs before the fornication, which is the reverse of the Bible order, which says the divorce must be for fornication, necessarily implying the fornication must occur before the divorce. (to be continued next month)

What Manner of Person

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11)

This verse affirms that God expects us to be a specific type of person. He is not pleased with us if we fail

to grow and develop as His children. We begin our spiritual journey with Him as babes in Christ (1 Peter 2:2). Yet this same apostle reveals to us we must add to our faith. He tells us to add virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brother kindness, and love so we will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord (2 Peter 1:5-8). This is the only way we can make our calling and election sure (1 Peter 1:10).

Peter says to be holy in our conduct. The word holy is defined as, "in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy" (Thayer's **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 7). We should live our lives separated from sin, being morally pure and dedicated to obtaining the qualities possessed by our Lord. God has always wanted His people to be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17). Obviously we are to live in the world but are not to be of the world (John 17:14-20). When Paul wrote to those at Corinth, he said they had been fornicators, adulterers, thieves, homosexuals, drunkards, etc. Yet now they are described as being washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). They had made the necessary changes to enjoy fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Not only are we instructed to be holy in conduct, but we likewise are also to manifest godliness. The word "godliness" means, "reverence, respect; in the Bible everywhere piety towards God, godliness; in plur.; aims and acts of godliness" (Thayer. 262). The only way one will show the proper reverence and respect for the Lord is when we are in awe of Him. Godliness will manifest itself in the various acts we do day by day. We will obey the Lord's will. We will comply with His terms of pardon and will submit to His law on how we are to live now that we are His children. As sons of God, we don't want to do anything which is not pleasing to Him, showing our love and devotion to Him. May the Lord help each of us to be holy and godly in our conduct. The apostle states a motivating factor for displaying these characteristics in our lives, "since all these things will be dissolved." He had just warned them about the day of the Lord (verse 10).

They were told that Jesus will come as a thief in the night, so preparation was of the utmost importance. Knowing that death can strike at any time or that the Lord could return at any moment, do you think it is imperative we be ready for that day? What a tragedy it would be to lose the only thing we have which is of any value and the only thing we can take from this world, our soul (Matthew 16:26). Hell is described as a place of torments, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-48). Surely we want to do all we can to avoid spending eternity in such a place. God has done His part in helping us to avoid hell and making it possible for us to live eternally with Him in heaven. This should inspire us to live holy and godly.

What kind of life are you living? Is it one which manifests to others that Christ is living in you (Galatians 2:20)? Or is it one which causes others to blaspheme the name of God because of your failures (Romans 2:21-24)? Remember, you will have to face the Lord in judgment when this world is destroyed (2 Peter 2:7-9).

But, What About Him?

Greg Gwin | Columbia, Tennessee, USA

When Jesus, after His resurrection, was challenging Peter about his devotion and foretelling the events that would befall him in the future (John 21:15ff), Peter turned to John and said "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Many have speculated that Peter was attempting to deflect the harsh light of scrutiny from himself and get the attention directed toward someone else. Jesus answered: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

If we were to put this into our own words, Jesus basically told Peter that it was none of his business what would happen to John, and that he needed to take care of his own matters. Peter's effort to shift the attention from himself was petty and immature. It was a like a child being scolded for misconduct. The typical reaction of the child is to point a finger at another child and say "but, what about him?" Parents can 'see right through' this tactic – and so can the Lord!

Unfortunately, many Christians display this same immature reaction when they have sinned and others are trying to restore them. They are quick to point at someone else in the church that has sinned in the past, or one who is currently dealing with a spiritual issue. They complain that others have not been dealt with consistently, or that they are being unfairly singled out.

Should we be consistent in dealing with all brethren who need to repent? Yes, of course! Can we do better? Without a doubt! But that is not the immediate concern of the one who is, himself, in need of restoration. Until he has corrected his own problems he needs to understand that other situations are 'none of his business'. Jesus would say, "What is that to thee?" Think!

Prayer Principles from the Sermon on the Mount

PRAYING LIKE JESUS

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

In Matthew 6, Jesus provided His disciples with an example of prayer (v 9-13). Eventually in our series looking at prayer we will devote an article to looking at the Lord's prayer as worded in Matthew 6. However, herein we want to examine the verses just preceding the prayer. In Matthew 6:5-8, Jesus gave several important principles which will help us to pray as we ought.

Pomp versus Privacy

Of the first century religious leaders, Jesus would bluntly declare, "...all their works they do to be seen by men" (Matthew 23:5). He would then give multiple evidence of their conceit and egotism (v 5-28). In the context of our text in Matthew 6, Jesus warned about doing deeds to be seen by men (v 1-4), fasting to be seen by men (v 16-18), and praying to be seen by men (v 5-6). Notice:

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:5-6)

Prayer should be a private endeavour, not a public display. But the Pharisees, in their pursuit to be seen as devout and holy servants of God prayed openly to be seen by men. They were hypocrites!

in the synagogues

Of course, the synagogue was a place of prayer. Jesus was not condemning prayer at the synagogue, but the manner in which they prayed at the synagogue. They did not go to a private corner of the synagogue but would take a prominent place, for their concern was not to petition God but to appear pious before man. This could not be achieved in a dark corner of the synagogue - they had to be in the public eye. It may even be that if there were no audience present they would find no reason to pray.

on the corners of the streets

Though the Law did not regulate prayer, the Jewish people long had customary prayer times in the morning, afternoon, and evening. In Acts 3:1, "...Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour" (which is 3:00 p.m.). It is likely that devout Jews would keep these stipulated prayer times wherever they were (consider Daniel 6:10). It seems likely the Pharisees did their best to be in a public place when these scheduled prayer times occurred; thus, praying on the street corners to be seen by men.

Of course, the problem is not a prayer said in a public setting, whether it be the synagoue or the street; the

problem was their prayer was not about speaking to God, but about being seen by people to be praying to God. Go ahead and offer thanks to God at the restaurant, but don't make a display of it. Go ahead and find a place in the park to pray, but don't do so to be seen in the public eye.

when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites

Understand how powerful a statement this is. He identified the religious leaders as hypocrites (actors, pretenders). They appeared to be righteous to the people, but were not. It was all for show. Recall the Pharisee in Luke 18 who "...prayed thus with himself..." God did not participate in their theater. The Lord does not hear the prayer of the self-righteous who are seeking men's praise.

Thus Jesus pleads with us, do not be like them. Be sincere in prayer. Don't pray to garner attention. Pray to be seen and heard by God, not by men. Where we pray is not important - how and why we pray is. Thus, the Lord said "...go into your room..." - seek a measure of privacy and solitude. Must we go into a room? No. Jesus went out to the mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:28; 21:37). The key is to converse with God, not to act before man.

Don't Be A Broken Record

Prayer is communication with God. Effective communication does not happen if we're using a series of catchphrases or slogans. Communication should come from the heart. Prayer to God is about expressing our gratitude to Him, pouring our hearts out in times of struggle, sharing our concerns with Him, declaring our praise to Him, confessing our sins to Him, etc.. Thus, Jesus spoke about our speech to God saying,

"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:7-8)

The English phrase "vain repetitions" translates the Greek word *battologeō*, which is derived from the name of a Greek poet (*Battos*) who was known for his long, weary and endless repetitive verses. Strong's says of this word:

"from Battos (a proverbial stammerer) and logos; to stutter, i.e. (by implication) to prate tediously:- use vain repetitions." (Strong's Concordance, Power BibleCD 5.9)

do not use vain repetitions

When you pray, don't babble, don't stammer, or as a few other translations would say, "*do not heap up empty phrases*" (**English Standard Version**), "*do not say the same thing over and over again*" (**New Life Version**), or don't "*say things that mean nothing*" (**New Century Version**). Prayer is communication; endless repetitions are not communication. Recall in the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, the pagan prophets took the bull, prepared it, "...and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But there was no voice; no one answered" (1 Kings 18:26). All morning, "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!..." Before long, it becomes entirely void of meaning.

Endless repetitions do not make us holy; they do not bring us closer to God. They might create emotionalism; they may be hypnotic, but they are not spiritual. On the rare occasion, I've been at religious services where the speaker and/or folks in the crowd have repeatedly said, "Praise you, Jesus! Praise you, Jesus! Praise you, Jesus! Praise you, Jesus!..." or "Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord!..." There is nothing of value, nothing that praises God or gives Him glory, when people stammer on in such a manner.

they think they will be heard for their many words

Jesus is not condemning long prayers. Sometimes a prayer may take all of 20 seconds (Jesus' example of

prayer in Matthew 6 takes about that to read); sometimes a prayer may take all night, as Jesus did on occasion. When we pray, use whatever time and words are needed to respectfully and diligently approach our Father in heaven. But don't mock Him through lengthy prayers filled with vain repetition. Chattering away for the sake of chattering will not make a prayer acceptable to the Lord.

your Father in heaven knows

Adam Clarke's Commentary notes:

"Prayer is not designed to inform God; but to give man a sight of his misery; to humble his heart, to excite his desire, to inflame his faith, to animate his hope, to raise his soul from earth to heaven, and to put him in mind that there is his Father, his country, his inheritance." (via Power BibleCD 5.9)

Prayer is for our benefit, not God's. It builds our faith; it focuses our lives; it relieves our anxieties. And thus, as we pray, we should do so, not merely to speak words, but with purpose.

Prayer is not merely about receiving answers to requests. There are times when God cannot answer our prayers. He won't force someone else's will. He will not undo what has already happened. Prayer is not always about changes and answers. Sometimes it is about God's consolation and comfort and presence. It may not take our sorrows away, but it will help us to deal with the sorrow. It may not solve the issues we face, but it will help us gain a measure of clarity. Speaking of one of the great benefits of prayer to us, the apostle Paul wrote *"...the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7). How does that work? I don't know. Neither did Paul. But it absolutely works.

Prayer offers an exceptional opportunity for humanity, as lowly and as frail as we are, to speak with our Creator. It affords an opportunity to word petitions to Him, but that is not the be-all-and-end-all of prayer. If asking God for answers and changes is the extent of our focus in prayer, we need to grow up. God knows what we need, what we desire, what we want before we open our mouths. So, why pray? Here are just a few reasons:

- It kindles the relationship between a Father and His child;
- It reminds us of our dependence upon our heavenly Father;
- It assures us of God's presence, whether times are good or bad;
- It helps us to gain perspective on temporal things - to appreciate the eternal picture.

Conclusion

Paul Billheimer, a protestant evangelist from the mid-1900s is credited with saying:

"Satan does not care how many people read about prayer if only he can keep them from praying." (via azquotes.com)

Let's not just study about prayer - we need to be praying. As with any topic, there is great value to dig into God's word and see what He says; but it is of no value to know what He says if we will not do it.

Another protestant evangelist from the late 1800s, Robert Forman Horton, has written:

"Therefore, whether the desire for prayer is on you or not, get to your closet at the set time; shut yourself in with God; wait upon Him; seek His face; realize Him; pray." (via quotefancy.com)

Make a time for prayer and keep it. Learn to make prayer a habit, but more than a habit. May the desire and the practice of speaking to God become second nature to us, a fervant desire to have intimate time with the Almighty.

Will Christ Reign On Earth For 1000 Years?

Ethan Jennings | Olney, Illinois, USA

For years, many have believed the theory that when Christ returns, He will reign on earth for a thousand years following the battle of Armageddon. Sadly, several believe this doctrine, including Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and even among some churches of Christ.

The doctrine is based on a misinterpretation of Revelation 20:4, which says:

"Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

What is misunderstood revolves around that last phrase, "reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Many claim that this is a literal and physical reign of Christ on the earth for a thousand years. There are, however, two big reasons not to believe this is the case.

First, the descriptions in the Book of Revelation need to be understood as symbolic. In the **King James Version**, in Revelation 1:1, it begins, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The word "signified" means it was shown in a symbolic way. Within the descriptions, nothing should be taken as literal. Most don't take the beasts and the dragon as literal. The same approach needs to be applied to the thousand years. The thousand years should not be understood as a literal thousand years.

Second, this was something soon to take place. Back in the first verse of Revelation, it said, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass..." Some want to argue the prophecies are either concerning us or concerning a generation after us. However, these were to come about in the time of those to whom John was writing.

What then is the thousand-year reign? What does it represent? The highest number in the Greek language is one thousand. Therefore, the thousand years in Revelation 20:4 refers to a completed period of time. The Book of Revelation describes the saints as already reigning with Christ (Revelation 1:6, cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). We're living in this "thousand-year" period today – a period of time of which only God knows its end.

In conclusion, a physical thousand-year reign of Christ on earth is just another doctrine from men and has no Biblical basis.

Congregational Song Leading

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When we lift up our voices in song to our glorious Lord God, our hearts must sing louder than our voice. Consider these Scriptures:

Exodus 15:1 - *"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto Jehovah, and spake, saying, I will sing unto Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously: The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."*

1 Chronicles 16:9 - *"Sing unto him, sing praises unto him; Talk ye of all his marvellous works."*
2 Chronicles 29:30b *"...And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."*
Psalm 57:7 - *"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, yea, I will sing praises."*
Psalm 95:1 - *"Oh come, let us sing unto Jehovah; Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."*
1 Corinthians 14:15b - *"...I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."*
Ephesians 5:19 - *"speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord..."*
Colossians 3:16 - *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."*
James 5:13 - *"Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise."*
Revelation 15:3 - *"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages."*

There are over 100 verses that speak similarly about singing praises to the Lord. There is no doubt that it is pleasing to His ear. There also is no doubt from other passages that we secondarily edify one another with the words in the songs.

Note that in 1 Corinthians 14:15 we should be singing with understanding. First, the words being sung must make sense to us in the context of praising God and edifying one another. This should lead us to conclude that it is important to know what we are singing. I think we all understand this. Granted, most people do not know how to read music. The music might appear to be secondary, but singing is a combination of words and melody. If we only have words it is a poem. Likewise if we only have melody it is humming. While there is nothing wrong with poems and humming, those individual things are not what God is looking for as we worship Him. Remember, we "make melody in our heart" (Ephesians 5:19).

Now consider this-- If a preacher speaks on a topic that he is not prepared to speak on, or someone leads the Lord's Supper without being prepared on what to say, would we have difficulty grasping what is being said? Similarly, if the song leader is not prepared to lead in song, will the congregation be able to sing with all their heart or will they be stumbling over how to sing a song (especially one they've never heard or done before)? This suggests that a preacher should know what he is planning to say, a man speaking at the Lord's table should know what he plans to say, and a song leader should know the songs being led and should sing them as a leader so the congregation can follow along even when they are not familiar with a song.

Finally, just as a preacher should have a strong enough voice to carry (or have some form of amplification so as to be heard), a song leader should be loud enough to carry the congregation through the songs. If we choose to lead in songs, which is a good thing to do, there should be some learning, preparation, and practice. To simply start a song and expect the congregation to carry it would be like having a preacher start a sermon and expecting the congregation to fill in the blanks. Let us do everything decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Let us consider one another unto love and good works! (Hebrews 10:24)

Do We Need Scriptural Authority?

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One day during the last week of the Lord's earthly ministry, as He was teaching in the temple, the chief priests, scribes and elders, who were in authority over the temple, demanded to know by what right or authority Jesus taught there (Luke 20:1-8). He offered to answer their inquiry if they would answer a question of his: "The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men?"

They huddled to find an answer and found none they were willing to give. They were obviously uninterested

in truth. They were only concerned with not being made to look bad before the public.

Jesus had them in a dilemma. They had refused John's baptism (cf. Luke 7:29). After all, John's baptism demanded repentance (Luke 3:1-14), and thus, if they had submitted to John's baptism, these self-righteous hypocrites would have been admitting their sinfulness. But the people correctly believed John was a prophet from God, and to deny the heavenly authority of his baptism would enrage the public.

What to do? They betrayed their moral inability to judge a question of authority by claiming they did not know the answer to Jesus' question. Thus, He refused to submit the question of His authority to teach to them.

But their question was a legitimate one, albeit they were incapable of correctly judging the answer. Any activity in which we engage or which we advocate is subject to the inquiry: "Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?"

Jesus' question to the Jewish rulers shows the two possible answers: "The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men?" Our authority for teaching or acting is either from heaven, thus from God, or merely from men.

But I have asserted something without proof. Was the question the rulers posed legitimate apart from their hypocrisy? Do we need authority from heaven (God) for what we do?

What Is Authority?

The term here translated "authority" means "the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed...." (Thayer. 225). When our children were small, if Sandy said, "Kids, come in and wash your hands for supper," they obeyed. They knew she had the right to command them and the ability (and determination, I might add) to enforce her commands. She had authority over them.

All authority is one of two kinds. First, there is inherent authority. God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24). Since God created the universe, He owns it all and has all authority over it. All legitimate authority is inherent in Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:27-28). When Sandy ordered the children to wash their hands, she exercised authority inherent in her office as mother.

On the other hand, there is delegated, or given, authority. The Jewish leaders asked, "Or who is he who gave You this authority?" (Luke 20:2) The Master prefaced the Great Commission by claiming all delegated authority: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'" (Matthew 28:18). When Sandy sent one of the children out to get the others in, the messenger would announce, "Mama says...." Any command not prefaced by "Mama says" was ignored! They might have asked, Who gave you this authority?

There are two ultimate sources of authority: God or man (Luke 20:4). To act with no higher authority than man's is to serve God in vain (Matthew 15:1-9).

Open Contempt for Authority

Western Society (Europe and the Americas) exalts personal freedom to the point of having open contempt for all authority. I was a graduate assistant for a history professor when I was studying to teach history. He proudly proclaimed himself to be a rebel against all authority, although he was working for a state institution and being paid from funds received from state and federal taxes. His attitude is typical. American adults refuse to submit to God's law of divorce and remarriage, and their children refuse to submit to parental authority. Americans by and large ignore speed laws, and both individuals and corporations try to cheat on income taxes. Religiously, the denominations don't even have the word "authority" in their vocabulary, and most brethren have the attitude, "We do lots of things without Bible

authority.”

Do We Need Divine Authority?

At the same time reasonable people recognize the need for authoritative standards in every day life. Our nation has a constitution and system of laws that insures we can live in an orderly, safe society. The Bureau of Weights and Standards has existed since the beginning of our constitutional republic to enforce standard weights and measures in commerce. When you buy five pounds of sugar or a gallon of milk, you want to know you're getting what you paid for. All sports contests, from beginner level to pro, have rules and referees to enforce these rules.

What is true in human relationships is true of our relationship with God. We need divine authority for what we do.

We need the guidance of divine authority because we are incapable of so guiding ourselves so as to please God.

“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” (Jeremiah 10:23)

When men reject divine authority, the results are tragic. The period of the judges was a dark era in the history of Israel. Idolatry and immorality prevailed (Read Judges chapters 17 - 21; especially 19:30.) Why? “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; cf. 21:25). When there is no authoritative guide, but everyone does what seems right in his own mind (“Let your conscience be your guide.”), anarchy, mayhem, immorality, and injustice prevail.

The apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Corinth:

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

How can we “speak the same thing” and “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” without accepting and following a common, authoritative standard?

The apostle also informed the Corinthians:

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.
(1 Corinthians 1:21)

Without an authoritative revelation from God to guide us, we cannot know the Lord or how to please Him.

The great principle of the life that pleases God is thus stated by Paul, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7) Since “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), the life that pleases the Lord is one directed by the authority of His Word.

For these reasons, the Lord plainly demands that we submit to His authority in all things. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17) To act “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to act by His authority (Vine. 3:100; cf. Acts 4:18).

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. (2 John 9; **ASV**)

Conclusion

Many brethren assert, “We do lots of things without Bible authority.” The inspired apostle of Christ commanded, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17) Which way will you go, with the majority or with the Lord? “Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.” (Romans 3:4)

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