
VOICE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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"FLESHED-OUT" FAITH **A PRAYER TO REMEMBER**

Have you ever been in a long line at Wal-Mart when only one register is being operated by a lady who is on the phone to her supervisor trying to find the price of an item? Suddenly she leaves her station and runs to a department to find the price of that item. Life is now on hold for what seems like a century. What about all those other registers that could be in operation? You slowly look at the other people's carts ahead of you and begin to calculate how long its going to take before it's your turn. Why do you seem to catch all the red lights and work zones? Why does time seem to stand still when you order in a restaurant? Why does the person who ordered after you get his food first? My views on the tribulation, atonement or resurrection have little to do with the current situation. One thing does though—"The fruit of the Spirit in operation in me at the time." (Galatians 5:22-23) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.**

The ability to accept delay, or disappointment, or smile at set backs, or respond with a pleasant and understanding spirit is not a characteristic of the flesh. The flesh's response is the opposite of the aforementioned. Fruit is the end result of much labor. Ask any farmer. Fruit is the vision of a farmer in the beginning followed by much cultivation and nurturing. The fruit of the Spirit in operation is usually a result of many years of cultivating our lives with the plow of God's Word, pulling up the weeds that smother the good plants and just gut determination to accomplish the will of God in our lives. The next time you're in one of the precarious situations that I mentioned above, remember that the other person is not concerned about your views on eschatology but rather the look on your face that is formed by the "FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT."

Pastor George Ferrington

REMEMBER THE
SABBATH DAY
BY KEEPING IT **HOLY.**
EXODUS 20:8

An interesting prayer was given recently in Kansas at the opening session of their senate in 2000. It seems prayer still upsets some people. When Minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate with a prayer, everyone was expecting that it would be standard generalities, but this is what they heard:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that: **We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and call it pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.** Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of your will, to open our hearts and ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In 6 short weeks, Central Christian Church where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 being negative. The church is now receiving international requests for copies of the prayer from India, Africa and Korea.

Commentator Paul Harvey aired this prayer on "The Rest of the Story" on the radio and received a larger response to this program than any he has ever aired. With the Lord's help, may this prayer sweep over our nation called one nation under God. If possible, pass this prayer on to a friend. If you don't stand for something, you will fall for everything.

THE PLAN OF THE MASTER WEAVER

Our lives are but weavings that God and we prepare.
Each life becomes a fabric planned and fashioned in His care.
We may not always see just how the weavings intertwine,
but we must trust the Master's hand and follow His design.
For He can view the pattern upon the upper side,
While we must look from underneath, and trust in Him to guide. . .
Sometimes a strand of sorrow is added to His plan,
And though it is difficult for us, we still must understand.
That it's He who fills the shuttle, it's He who shows what's best,
So we must weave in patience and leave to Him the rest.
Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
— Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.

VICTORY THROUGH SURRENDER?

Surrender is not something that military men contemplate positively. When two armies on opposing sides have fought until one side is so decimated, the leader is torn between seeing still more of his troops slaughtered or the ignominious defeat of surrender.

This kind of surrender however does not mean that the defeated troops are safe. Many armies over the centuries have surrendered only to watch as every last man was murdered in cold blood.

Also, when a fighting group surrenders, they must relinquish all guns, tanks, sidearms or weapons and supplies of all types. Even if their life is spared, they are stripped of all but the clothing that they wear. Surrender is then the act of totality that leaves one with only his breath of life.

The USA is famous for accepting the surrender of a warring group and then putting them up in surroundings and in a manner that was far better than the life from which they had surrendered. Almost like honored guests.

There are thousands, hopefully millions, of persons who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and have been thus saved. Being saved is to believe. Most of these persons then should begin to attend church and begin to live the life that a child of God should live. But so often this is not the case. Where a person is saved, it is his spirit that is saved. That spirit has been intertwined with God's Holy Spirit and his spirit is delivered from the death of hell. But is that as far as Jesus meant for us to go when He saved us? Not at all. Now that He possesses our spirit that has been saved by God's Spirit, Jesus now wants the rest of us too. So many people believe that since Jesus alone has the power to change us from what we were to what we should be that they determine that none of that is their problem. No, we cannot save our own spirit, but then there is something called the soul. What then is our soul? Like God and Jesus in whose image we were created, we too have a physical body, a spirit and a soul.

We know what the physical body is, but our spirit is a different story. Many do not know or are not aware of their own spirit. The Bible tells us that man's spirit is in the heart. Are we speaking of the muscle which pumps the blood through our bodies? Or does the biblical heart have a meaning which does not tell us about our own spirit? The heart then of the Bible is the inner man. The part of us that is so deep within us that we often function in sinful ways without this inner man or heart ever giving us a twinge of conscience. Yet that heart of inner man is there. Ready to become the center of our life, if we will but permit it.

This then is the part of us that Jesus can speak to, can touch with His power, that the Holy Spirit can finally enmesh with to begin the process of salvation. But through all of the exhorting, pleading, emotional appeals, we still have this part of us that is called the soul. This part of us is the pleasure part. It is the thoughts, it is the mental processes. It is the longing for a comfortable situation. It is the meanness that we will approach another in order to take something away from him that will add to our own net worth. Our comfort level. This soul is by its very nature always at odds with our spirit, and God's Spirit. Jesus has saved our spirit man, but it is up to us to abandon and defy the soul part of us that wants to do its own thing, to have its own way.

The Bible tells us clearly that whoever shall lose his life (soul) for the sake of Christ shall gain it. It also says that whosoever would gain his own soul must lose it. Is this contradictory? No, it is talking about who has control of our life (soul) once we have been saved. Are you willing to live the way Jesus lived on this earth? Or do you want to live like a big kahuna and "have" all that you want, even when others are in need. Are you willing to put first in life the will and love of Jesus Christ? If not, you are saving your soul right here on earth and you will not rule with Jesus when He comes into His kingdom. Or are you willing to do what Jesus would have you to do, no matter what the cost? Then you my precious brother and sister will be one of those who will rule and reign with Christ when He comes into His kingdom.

In our relationship with the living Christ then, we must choose to surrender. We must be willing to forego all of the "things" that we have so proudly bought and are so vital in our everyday life. Nothing can become greater to us than putting Jesus first in our lives. Everything else is second. We must learn then how to surrender. Not some of us or a part of us, but all that we are and all that we will ever want to be. That is surrender. Until we reach that place where we are willing to put all on the altar, and choose Jesus instead, we have not totally surrendered.

Bro. Vic Clayton



The month of February contains Valentine's Day, a special time to show that you care. My question for you is this. Is there someone for which you care? Care enough to express that love? It may be through a card, flowers, a night out, a touch that shows you care, or other means. Usually showing you care takes a sacrifice, such as money spent, effort exerted, or putting down pride and revealing your emotions. When was the last time you told someone that you love them? Especially your spouse and immediate family. My father was not one to say those three words—I Love You. He showed his love in other ways, but you know, it doesn't cost much to say "I Love You." Only a little pride, a little self-centeredness, a little selfishness. That's all it costs. It cost our Lord and Savior His life to express His love to us. His was the ultimate sacrifice. Because He loved us, now we can love. His commandment is that we love one another, as He loved us, and as we should love Him and our Heavenly Father, we should love one another. Praise be to God. Bro. Mike Woods

MIRROR IMAGE

1 Corinthians 13:12—Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. James 1:23-24—Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at himself in a mirror; And,

after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. I suppose when we take a look at our lives, we may not always like what we see. We cannot seem to be content with our lives the way they are. All around us is change, so naturally we ourselves want something different in our lives. Our very personalities are affected by things that take place around us. Sometimes circumstances around us seem to sway and move us into places we don't need to be. By this I mean emotional distresses. There are times things happen around us that are not directly related to us. Someone dies that we don't really know personally, yet because they are a human being, we are affected. Our emotions tend to get the best of us especially if we know the person.

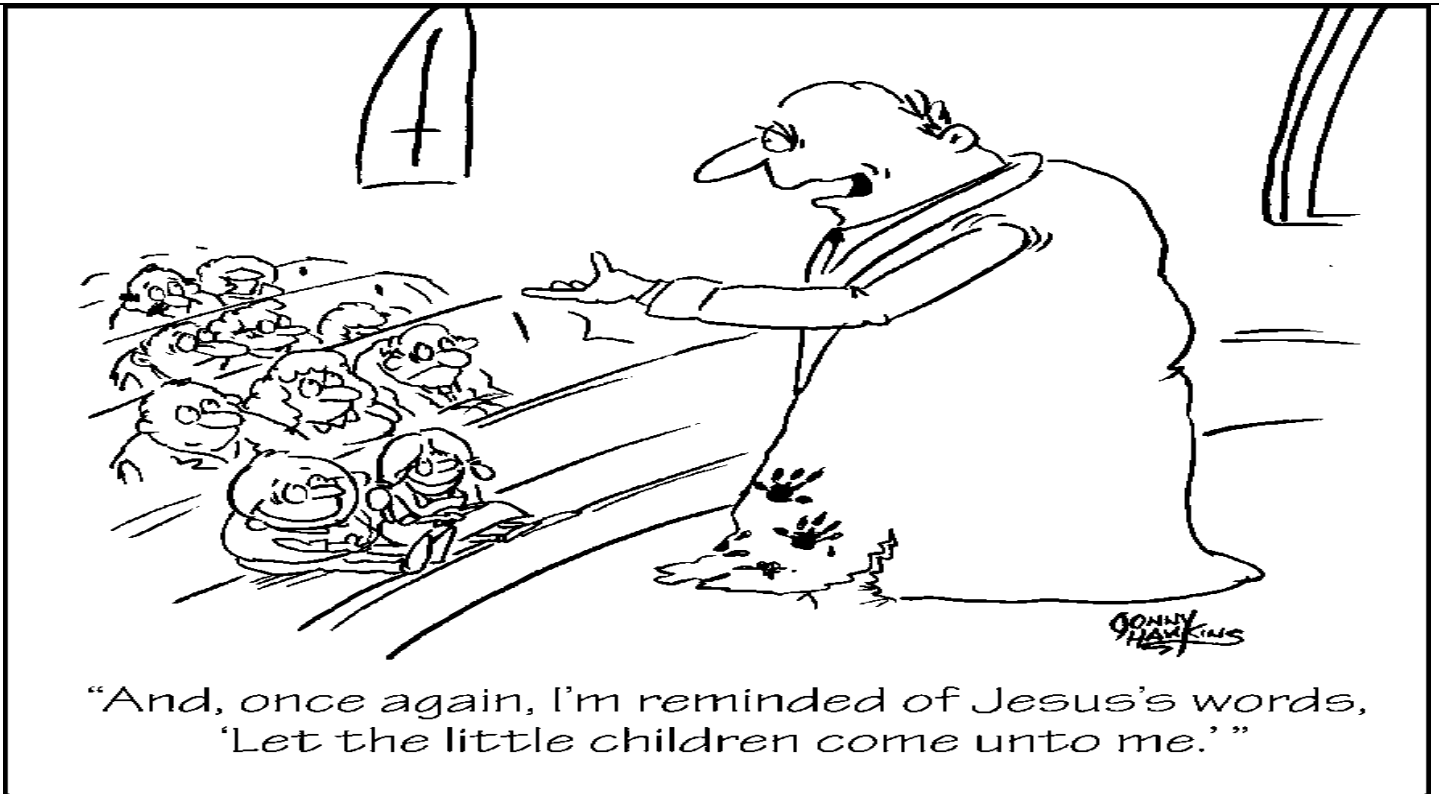
Pastor said something in a sermon once that best describes what I'm saying; "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." We cannot rejoice in the face of calamity. But what Pastor was saying was to rejoice in the Lord, because He is still the same before and after whatever came our way. The Father understands our hurts and pains. But also he expects us to understand that "The Father" never intended for our emotions to sway us. At least not sway us away from Him, but towards Him.

Well, everything around us is not always perfect, but everything within us is always in order. All things outside are in constant chaos, and always will be. But inside each of us, in our spirits, is the perfect divine order God has set up. The Father has created in each of us a place of peace and rest. Within each of us is a refuge. We need only to be still and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into that refuge. I believe that built into each of us is the capacity to fulfill every need and desire of our heart. Everyone of us desires at least one thing that is a common factor in our lives—that is to find happiness or contentment in this life. Remember the mirror image. Sometimes we don't like what we see in the mirror. But I believe I have some good news. God's idea of the image we are to portray has nothing to do with us personally. We cannot walk about in this life as some kind of painted picture with no flaws. But what is portrayed to people is what comes from within us.

We don't like what we see in our lives so we try to change things to make ourselves appear more acceptable. When all in all, people are people, normally they can never fulfill their own expectations as individuals. The Father's plan for our lives is for us to portray the image of His Son Jesus! Anything else we try to achieve will only be our futile attempts at cleaning ourselves up. I am fully convinced that without God's Word, a born again believer can never find true happiness. I have spent most of my life in search of happiness. I tried to find something to fill the void in me. I wanted satisfaction in certain areas of my life. So, in my quest for happiness I discovered something. When you seek the Father, I mean with all of your heart, to make the Lord the treasure you're searching for, then there is a contentment that starts to settle in on a person. Soon all the thoughts of unhappiness seem to just roll away. I don't mean all at once. I believe it to be a process. Happiness or contentment will come when you make the Lord your refuge. Each time you get through something you become stronger. You still have memories of what you went through; but what the situation was about becomes a big nothing. You are not stirred about it any longer. The mirror image I spoke of earlier has nothing to do with our outward appearance, or the way we may feel about any given situation. It is strictly confined to the part of us that knows God. Whether or not we realize this grace fact, we are in our spirits the very image of Christ portrayed to this world. Sometimes, we are the only Jesus that some people will ever see!

We need not feel bad about ourselves; for God is not finished with us yet. With every passing day of our lives, the Father is taking the brush and placing the finishing strokes on the picture of our lives. The very image we possess within us, the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember in James 1:23—The Word speaks of the man who looked in the mirror; then walked away and forgot what he looked like. I thank God that when we look in the mirror (the spiritual mirror that is), that we don't see ourselves. But what we see is our potential as one who has the capacity to love without limit and without reservation. James 1:25 goes on to say that if we look intently into the perfect Word of God that gives freedom and continue in it, not forgetting who we are in Christ and not forgetting what we have heard, but doing it, we will be blessed in all that we do. In other words, if we look intently into God's Word, not forgetting the Word, but taking it to heart and putting it into practice, then the image that is set forth to this world is that of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is impossible to find true contentment without the Lord. That is why the Apostle Paul said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then in II Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." "Therefore I will boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now Paul knew a thing or two about being content, because he drew his strength from the Lord, directly from the Lord. That is why Paul said, "As I imitate Christ, you also imitate me." Beginning to get the picture? In other words, what people saw in Paul was the image of Jesus Christ. Not outwardly, for this tent we wear is perishing. But that which is within us is flourishing, and yet to be revealed. But with Jesus living inside us, how can something so lovely be contained. May You Be Richly Blessed,

Bro. Neal Emfinger, Jr.



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GOD IS LOVE!!!