

## **Why I Pray**

I pray because I believe God listens. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 Jno. 5:14).

I pray because God has told me that He cares and is able to help. "...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you ...," (1 Pet. 5:7; see also Lk. 12:6,7; Heb. 4:16).

I pray because my Savior said I ought to pray. "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart," (Lk. 18:1).

I pray because I'm thankful for all the good things God has given. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God," (Phil. 4:6; see also, Col.4:2; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

I pray because I need pardon. "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," (1 Jno. 2:1; see also Acts 8:22 & Psa. 51:1-9).

I pray because I adore and love my Father. "In this manner, therefore, pray: 'Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name'," (Matt. 6:9).

I pray because I've read so many accounts of people who prayed to God with great results. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." (Jas. 5:17,18). "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," (Jas. 5:16).

I pray because of Paul's exhortation. "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior," (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

I pray because I believe God has the ability to grant even more than I'm able to think and ask. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:14-21).

**- by Warren E. Berkley**

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## **Good for Evil**

Most Bible students are familiar with Jesus' teaching to "turn the other cheek." In the Sermon on the Mount he referred to the Jewish practice of exacting an "eye for an eye" and a "tooth for a tooth" and then taught his disciples that if a man "smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Mt. 5:39).

At first this seems to be a "hard saying"-- one that is difficult to accept and practice. And it is. But as the years go on -- maybe its age, physical weakness, or my natural tendency to be cowardly -- I have found this command less demanding. I seldom build up feelings of retaliation. Where I struggle is the next level to which both Peter and Paul take this instruction.

Paul taught the brethren at Rome to "render to no man evil for evil" and then said "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink ... be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"(Rom. 12:17,20,21). Peter says essentially the same thing and then tells brethren to render a "blessing" to those who mistreat them (1 Pet. 3:9).

What both apostles tell us is that the love of Christ demands that we act with positive good will toward our enemies. I would be fine if I could pray for them, as Jesus also taught (Mt. 5:44), and then ignore them. I have found this to be true in many situations in the church and even in family life. I seldom feel the need to get even, but it is a real temptation to sulk, become moody, and treat brethren and family members with indifference.

How many times I have done this, how many times I have preached to myself about it, how many times I have taken days, weeks, and even months to get back to a normal relationship with the persons involved. We should really pity folks who are petty and who wrong us, we should leave them to the Lord for judgment, and we should seek to show them goodness -- manifesting to them a benevolent and kind spirit. How well I know this, but how pitifully I practice it.

May God help me and all of us to love and do good at all times.

- by **L.A. Stauffer**

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## ***Intolerance***

Author John J. Pullen wrote:

*"The word intolerance, in today's usage, has unjustly come to be considered reprehensible per se. Once this dreadful word is applied to an individual, few people even stop to consider the relative merits or demerits of whatever it is the accused person is accused of being intolerant of. Far from being too much intolerance, we have too little! For if we are to have craftsmanship, we must be intolerant of bungling. If we are to have learning, we must be intolerant of ignorance. If we are to have beauty and poetry, we must be intolerant of vulgarity. If we are to have excellence in anything, we must be intolerant of non-excellence".*

Pullen's observations are correct. They apply in science and industry; in education and medicine; and in an hundred other fields of endeavor. They also apply in the realm of religion. There is, perhaps, no other area where men have come to believe so thoroughly in "tolerance." We are told that we must never condemn another man's religion. We are warned against ever saying that a certain teaching or practice is wrong or sinful. People, it seems, will tolerate anything but intolerance!

Yet, the result of all this "tolerance" is non-excellence in religious service. These days anything goes. All sorts of unauthorized acts are practiced in the name of religion. It is a shame. God is NOT pleased!

God's word speaks of "pure" and "undefiled" religion (James 1:27). In order to have it, we must be intolerant of any departure from God's holy revealed word. Are you standing firmly for His truth?

- by **Greg Gwin**