

Prayer

I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the victory You give me over sin;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the love You have planted within me;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the glorious church of Your people;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the expected coming of Your Kingdom;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for being You, and saving me! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

- *Pray for the world and the problems faced by the planet*
- *Pray for your nation, its leaders and its politicians*
- *Pray for your local neighbourhood and local community issues*
- *Pray for your church; its worship, service and mission*
- *Pray for those who live around you and your relationship with them*
- *Pray for your family and the issues that affect you at this time*

Meditation

Oh my soul, turn a corner;
 Redirect your life towards a heavenly goal.

Oh my soul, see the light;
 Shine forever brightly in this gloomy world.

Oh my soul, listen for the voice;
 Hear and do the will of God throughout your life.

Oh my soul, seek peace;
 Accept God's purpose for the whole of His creation.

Oh my soul, speak the truth;
 Declare what God alone has put upon your heart

Oh my soul, accept Christ's love;
 Release the devil's grip upon your life for all eternity.

Oh my soul, stay open for your God.

Bible Study - 2 Peter 3:14-18

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Reflections

You will always find spiritual treasures towards the end of the New Testament letters. Their writers sought to convey important truths about faith to the congregations of the early church, and every word counted. Centuries before writing became commonplace and the tools to do it became cheap, letters were valued

highly and today's 'junk mail' would have been inconceivable. If it was written down, it was written for a purpose and an important one at that! Here, Peter encourages the people of God to strive for the highest standards of godliness (3:14), and he concludes his letter with an appeal to '*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*' (3:18).

This advice is pertinent to us all today, because it is written in Scripture, and we live at a time when even those who consider themselves good Christians often find it hard to give more than a few minutes each day to prayer. In addition, large numbers of churches (certainly in England) have no programme of discipleship or of teaching about the Bible at all. Many long for this, but few find the time to attend, and statistics show that numbers buying study material in Christian bookshops is decreasing rather than increasing.

I do not like writing about this, but it is necessary. I know how hard it is to eke out time to read and learn about the things of faith, but I know I would grow cold in faith if I did not continue to seek to know more of God. Even as I have written this website for four years now, God has revealed more and more to me and I have been amazed at what I have learned.

The other day, I was forced to wait for nearly an hour to see a doctor. However, I was prepared and took a book. I read through some of the diaries of John Wesley because I find them amazingly fresh and interesting. The passage I read comes in 1763, after twenty years of riding around England, preaching up to three times a day for many days each week, and setting up societies of believers. Nevertheless he was sad to write this report about one region of the UK, on Thursday 25th August:

I was more convinced than ever that the preaching like an Apostle, without joining together those that are awakened, and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these twenty years ... but no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection; and the consequence is this, that nine in ten of the once awakened are now faster asleep than ever!

Of course, we know that Wesley's work was not in vain, and God used what he began to bring salvation to many people and grow the church of God across the world, let alone the UK. However, Wesley understood what happened when preaching and good words were not backed up with good training and organisation. He knew that Christians needed to grow in the things of God, and that they did this best in company with others and in a disciplined way. This is why he spent more and more of his time working to organise Christians into disciplined societies for mutual support and growth.

Wesley's methods were appropriate for the day, and not necessarily for now; but his principles were right because they were Biblical. He was only saying in words suitable for his own day what Peter said in his letters, which is that Christians must strive for the Lord, and should grow in grace and knowledge of Him. From this, it seems to me that we will know when true revival and renewal happens in our midst again, for people will become excited about studying the Bible, they will pray and see God at work in new ways all around them, and churches generally will be filled with people rejoicing in prayer and worship. True faith will be demonstrated once more by a genuine zeal amongst Christians for the things of God; and from the least to the greatest, God's people will delight to grow in grace and the knowledge of God. I see something of this today, but I firmly believe we will see more of it in the future, and we must be ready to work for the things of God!

God bless you

Paul H Ashby