



Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

VOL. XXX
NO. 3
January 18, 2015

Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

Gethsemane

Down shadowy lanes, across strange streams
Bridged over by our broken dreams;
Behind the misty caps of years,
Beyond the great salt fount of tears,
The garden lies. Strive as you may,
You cannot miss it on your way.
All paths that have been or shall be,
Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.

All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,
And battle with some fierce despair.

God pity those who cannot say,
“Not mine, but Thine”; who only pray
“Let this cup pass,” and cannot see
The purpose in Gethsemane.

—Ella W. Wilcox

The Beautiful Simplicity of Believing Prayer

Sometimes people get the idea that the definition of a good prayer is frenzy. One writer said, “I storm the heavens in prayer! I cry, I scream, I beg, I plead, I even stomp around!” But really, all that’s not necessary.

I’ve always been struck by the intentional comparison between the 400 priests of Baal and the lone prophet Elijah on Mt. Carmel. The idol-worshippers “leaped about the altar ... they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves ... with swords and lances until the blood gushed out ... they raved” (1 Kings 18:27–29) but the heavens were silent. Elijah spoke aloud a simple, heartfelt, two-sentence prayer, and the fire of God rocketed down and consumed not only the offering, but the entire altar as well!

Naaman was angry when Elisha didn’t raise a ruckus to heal his leprosy. In fact, Elisha didn’t even come out of the house to say hello. I’m confident that Elisha wasn’t being lazy, but showing that the power of healing resided in God, not in Elisha. He sent a lowly messenger, who told Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times, and he would be clean. Naaman said, “I thought he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the place” (2 Kings 5:11). But when Naaman faithfully obeyed, he was immediately cleansed.

When Jesus healed the centurion’s servant, He didn’t even have to travel to his home and touch him, He simply said “let it be done” and the servant was healed that very instant and across the miles (Matt. 8:13). When Jesus fed the five thousand, He simply “gave thanks” (John 6:11) and started breaking the loaves.

Let us always remember that prayer is about glorifying God, not entertaining an audience or glorifying man. I know that an awesome prayer has just taken place not because my heartbeat has been elevated with exercise or my senses have been stimulated by lights and shouting, but when the true elements of believing prayer are present—a righteous person worshipfully communicating with God (James 5:16).

Then again, perhaps I don't want to take this too far. Prayer is about thanking God for what He has done, recognizing and praising God's glory, and making requests for things we need, even things that God already knows we need. Prayer is communication, and God loves to hear from His children. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). We don't need to literally "storm the heavens" in prayer, pounding on the doors with a battering ram like people would attack a castle. Yet, certainly we could stand a little more fervency than we usually will permit.

When Hannah prayed for a baby, she was fervent enough in her lips and in her posture that Eli suspected she was drunk (1 Sam. 1:12-17). Solomon "in the presence of all the assembly of Israel spread out his hands toward heaven" (1 Kin. 8:22). King Jehoshaphat, "bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:18). Jesus "fell on His face and prayed" (Matt. 26:39). When the tax-collector was ashamed of his sins and appealed to God for mercy, He was "beating his breast" (Luke 18:31). Hezekiah brought the object of consternation—the evil letter that had been sent to him by the king of Assyria—and "spread it out before the Lord" and prayed over it (2 Kings 19:14). Ezra directed the people in fasting (Ezra 8:23). The psalms are full of phrases of effusive praise that we could incorporate into our prayers. And while Jesus' power was not limited by distance, He "spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and applied the clay to his eyes" to cure the man born blind (John 9:6). Thus, while we don't have to be at someone's bedside holding their hand to pray for them effectively, it sure is nice to get a visit and to have someone touch you and pray with you (James 5:14-15).

I guess what we discover is that effective prayer needs no manufactured drama. But neither does our love of God and our fervency need to be squelched and sanitized. Let all things be done orderly in the worship service. But in your private time, you might speak more naturally and freely to God!

—*John Guzzetta*

They Can't Learn By Osmosis

“Osmosis evangelism” hinders personal soul winning. Many Christians feel that they are doing what the Lord intended by letting their lights shine so that others can see their good works.

This is essential, and without setting the right example, teaching is impossible. But, teaching is necessary too. Jesus went about doing good, but then He taught. Christianity is not radiated or spread by osmosis any more than a teacher can teach math via a good attitude. Christianity is a body of truth that must be taught by the lips of people that have made it a reality in their own lives. If you do not tell a person *why* you live a good life, they will never know that you do it for Christ. A good life is not evangelism. It is pre-evangelism.

Another hindrance to soul winning is that we are not really convinced that our friends and neighbors are lost. Most of them are members of some denomination, they live good lives, they have heard many sermons on TV. This creates a lack of urgency. We must remember that there are religious sins, too. Christ warned that many on the judgment day would profess knowledge of Christ, but would be turned away for lack of obedience (Matt. 7:21–28). They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:23). The man lost in religious error has special need for someone to expound unto him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26).

There are other excuses and hindrances. “I’m too busy.” “I’m already doing my part by praying and giving.” “I’ve tried but no one seems interested.” “I just don’t know the Bible well enough to teach it to others.” “No one makes me do it.” “I don’t know how to start.” If we will simply try, we will find that the Lord will often grant success.

Consider the words to this old song: “If you cannot sing like angels, if you cannot preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, you can say he died for all. If you cannot cross the ocean, and the heathen land explore, you can find a lost soul closer, you can find one right next door!”

—*Otis Gatewood (pp. 45–60)*