



# Prayergram<sup>®</sup>

Challenging Christians to Pray

May 2010

## Slot-machine Theology

A cartoon some years ago depicted two men talking, a crucifix on the wall behind them. Said the one to the other, "If I am okay, and you're okay, then, what's He doing up there on that cross?" To move forward on the road to a godly walk, it is a question each one of us must answer. Before I go any further, let me make it crystal clear that salvation is a gift from God through His sovereign mercy, and it should be treated with utmost reverence and gratitude and should not be given away at a cut price. The popular belief is that Christ died for me, therefore, I can do whatever I want, and go scot-free, is never taught in the sacred Scriptures. That's developed as a 'convenient theology' to provide cover for carnal Christians who'd love to dabble in 'social and spiritual rationalization.' Hair-splitting faith is not real faith and genuine Christians do not leaf through the Bible looking for loopholes to heaven either. Faith without obedience is antagonism. What we applaud is what we approve; what we approve is what we believe. The divine purpose of God is to make us holy, not happy or wealthy. If our Christian walk has ceased to be serious about discipleship, then we've watered down the gospel into a 'feel-good' emotional lift which negates the 'costly grace' of Calvary.

Being born again by the spirit of God is more than 'putting a couple of quarters in the slot of faith, pull down the handle and take salvation, and walk off with no questions asked!' Today, in our eagerness to get new members, we entice them with alluring programs and entertainments without truly introducing them to the Shepherd, and consequently multitudes are sliding back into the world which seems to be an undeniable consequence of grace acquired too cheaply. We give away the gospel at cut price whether the recipients wanted it or not, but the

call to discipleship is seldom heard. We proclaim with great fervor Christ as Savior but condone practices which deny Him as Lord and Master. We've exchanged the 'costly grace' of Calvary for the 'cheap grace' of 'easy believism,' which requires no repentance, restitution, separation from the world. *The message of the early church was*

*one of power and purity, and no wonder they turned the world upside down; but today, the world turns us upside down. Harnack, the historian, said that the Church influenced the world, most, when it was most unlike the world. Many years ago, Martin Luther warned the church against a proclamation of the gospel which made people secure in their godless lives. It is like telling someone, as long as you believe, it doesn't matter what you do. As C. S. Lewis states succinctly, "Sin away, my lad, and have a good time and Christ will see that it makes no difference in the end."*

It seems that we've made Christianity so palatable to accommodate a generation of pleasure lovers who do not actually love God. Is it any wonder that the new Christianity is being influenced by "Hollywood" rather than the Holy Spirit? The church began to deteriorate, as Augustine tells us, when *holy days* were emerged with holidays to please the influx of new pagan members. As Vance Havner said, "We have moved from the catacombs to the coliseums of America." A. W. Tozer was even more perceptive when he said,

*"Most evangelicals no longer initiate; they simply imitate, and the world is their model."*

Today, the trend within evangelical circles calls for advancement by modified preaching, clever programs, charming personalities, and compromising standards which will attract the masses and gain the favor of carnal Christians and the world. The honor which

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comes from man is more sought after than the honor that comes from God. We have so much sugar-coated religious stuff, and consequently, we have developed a perverted antipathy toward the real truth.

Religious stories are read with keen interest; it is front page stuff, and the so-called religion flavored books are among the best sellers. If you read the current evangelical reviews, it would convince us that all of America got saved last night twice. But nothing can be further from the truth. As Soren Kierkegaard said, "When everybody is a Christian nobody is a Christian."

Too many Christians have a false concept, a false interpretation of Christian liberty. Some even entertain the thought that regardless of what a Christian does, all is done under the banner of the cross. For such, Christian liberty spells permissiveness without boundaries or limitations. They view the spiritual principles of the Christian life as man made rules and regulations. Consequently, they indulge themselves in questionable amusements and pleasures, forgetting that the Bible teaches us to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

It is sad but true that many Christians have lost their joy and love for God because they have become enslaved again in the things of the flesh under the banner of Christian liberty. Freedom without moral responsibility is no freedom at all. It is not healthy to walk on the curb, and if we do we will definitely slide. *We must either progress or regress. There is no standing still in a religious life or in a sinful life.* Yet, many nominal Christians have chosen the life of regression rather than progression. Rationalization of sin has become the crowning mark of a carnal Christian. Please don't get me wrong, I am not talking about works, but I am talking about responsible Christian living. Carnal Christians have just enough grace to scrape it through the day; no wonder life has become a monotonous drudgery and tasteless living; they excuse themselves by saying, "The demand of the Christian life is too much and besides, no one is perfect, after all, everybody is flawed and what's the point of trying to be otherwise." Those who are engaged in such "theological rationalization" are the ones who continue to trample the blood of Christ under their feet.

It seems that the message of repentance is shunned as a matter of religious and political correctness. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., was profound when he said, "A man is not soundly converted until he fears God." If we denigrate the cross, we denigrate

the foundation of our faith. There is no power on earth that can surpass the power of the cross, and for that reason we're protected by what Martin Luther wrote many years ago, "a bull bark never failing." Beloved, let's move away from religious rationalization when it comes to loving God. There is always more of Him to be known and understood. Let's cry out to Him day and night for intimacy. Winking and making allowances to sin we become complicit. True conversion delivers godliness. Let's read the profound and heart-wrenching words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Christian martyr, "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheap wares of a bargain huckster. The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God. Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world and not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living Word, the Word of God, which God speaks as it pleases God." Need I say more!

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Yes, salvation is free but the cost of discipleship is very high. The grace of God never obligates or drafts anybody into His service. Our love for God must come from a willing and ready heart. Why should we beg and plead with people to do something for Jesus? After all, He gave all He had so that we may give all that we have for His glory. When God's people are in close fellowship with Him, support for His work is readily forthcoming. Let people see God working; let God be glorified; let believers be made holier, happier, brought nearer to Him, and they need not be cajoled in the area of giving and serving. Loving God should be looked upon as a privilege, not an obligation or duty. I believe every child of God should be apoplectic in the privilege of walking with Him; not a grudging walk, but a pleasurable one, one that delights the Father.

Are we convinced about Christ or just excited about Him? A young man told me once he was high on Jesus. Friends, you can't get high on Jesus just like you get high on drugs. Disney World is fine to visit, but we cannot live there, can we? A man's most important responsibility on earth is to know and love God supremely. But in our topsy-turvy state of mind, we reject the authority of God and the inspiration of the Scriptures by preferring man's wisdom over God's wisdom. We may sense something has gone wrong, that our old-fashioned faith has been dissipated, our cherished Christian principles tarnished, our spiritual sensitiveness has dulled—that, in reality, our sacred Christian way of life has shaken and its morals and ethical code of values have diminished. So in result, we are caught in the midst of a confused and frustrated society, and tragically, we do not even find the need to extricate ourselves from a barrel of molasses.

Many are trying to paint a cozy picture on the

outside; while the inside is in desperate need of a complete spiritual renovation. In our desperation to be important and noticeable in society, we create an atmosphere of artificial happiness, a superficial cordiality, a make-believe friendliness, a nauseating flattery, and thus, we become play actors, pretending to be happy when we are not. A glamorized Christianity has come to get everybody excited, but short-lived because it has no root or substance in the arena of Christian faith. It is what Dean Inge, the famous British Churchman, meant when he said, "We shall be defeated by the spirit of the age unless we hold to the spirit of the ages."

Dear friend, when we place our all on the altar, we'll know that the cost is nothing compared to the glory that we're going to share with our risen Lord and King. Yes, there is a price to pay but those who pay such price are the "real champions" for Christ.

*It does matter how we conduct ourselves as dear children of God in a world that is hostile to Christ and His message. When we are insulted and abused, we do not hit back or fight with conventional weapons or insist on our rights; every time we advance our so-called rights, we only hurt the cause of our Master who never hurts anyone. Thomas Carlyle, the 18th century Scottish poet and essayist was profound when he said, "Holy living is the best argument that tells for God in an age of fact." It is of paramount importance that we not only 'believe' on the Lord Jesus Christ but also 'behave' as Christians who embody our Savior in words as well as in deeds.*

Christians always look within so that they may become spiritually better, not bitter. The unsaved constantly looking for ways to lay the blame on others for their inability to focus the camera on

themselves for various reasons. Christians do suffer setbacks, disappointments and unpleasant experiences but through it all they maintain a level of decorum and loyalty to Christ whose very spirit they are baptized into. Those who are immersed in the grace of God usually experience an inward tranquility while they may undergo various trials of life.

Outer landscape involves the weeding, pruning, edging and the

disposing of all discarded materials to be burned or recycled. Likewise, the inner landscape involves spiritual pruning, weeding, edging and disposing of all that is sinful, carnal and unholy. In the army of the Lord promotion does not come by patronage or status; it is the gracious heritage of fidelity and love and consecration. In spiritual realm, we do climb one step at a time trudging to our final destination with our eyes on Jesus. "We must go through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom." We ask for blessing, well, then, are we ready for spiritual pruning and dissection? That is the call of the hour and only those who are in earnest will respond to such a clarion call. God's blessings are the unfathomable expression of His love and kindness toward His children.

**Speaking  
Candidly**  
by Matthew Skariah

**Inner  
Landscape**

**Prayer for inner cleansing:** Oh, Lord, work on every smudge, every stain, every carnality, every pretense, every facade, that might "dim and flicker" your light and glory in me. Master, please don't let thy glory ever depart from my life. Amen!

## Conference on Holiness and Prayer

With **Matthew Skariah** and **Larry Sauvageot**

**May 9-16**

**Friendship Baptist Church**  
Highland, Arkansas

Mike Stanley, Pastor

## Philippine Islands Conference

**National Pastors Conference on Prayer**

With **Matthew Skariah**

**August 2-9**

**Bible Baptist Church**

Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippine

Host Pastor: Richard Famador

## LETTERS OF INSPIRATION

I am writing this letter with overflowing tears in my eyes. After reading your book, *Talk Less and Pray More*, I fell on my knees and confessed to God about the prayerlessness of my life. Please speak to God on my behalf because I have reproached heaven grievously.

Why prayer left in the hands of a few? Why prayer belongs to a minority, especially in the area of intercession? The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is sleeping instead of weeping. Here in Nigeria, the gospel of wealth has taken the center stage. Your books are scarce in my country. By God's grace, I secured a copy of *Talk Less and Pray More*, and others are still at large. Please keep us in your prayers and send us your publication, *Prayergram*.

*Evang. Victor Nathaniel  
Rivers State, Nigeria*

I heard you preach at Wild Peach Baptist Church during their annual Bible Conference in January. The message you preached touched my heart. Also, I read your book, *Free, But Not Cheap*, and was challenged by it a lot. I enjoyed reading it and never wanted to put it down. Thank you for the book. I have recommended it to several of my friends, and they too were excited about reading it. I want to be a missionary and serve the Lord in some capacity. May God continue to bless you and the ministry.

*Gloria Kelly, 13 years of age  
Rosharon, Texas*

My name is Roy and I am 43 years of age, and serving a prison sentence in one of our states. I know I am here for a reason. I am a Christian who has experienced the power of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and I love Him with all my heart. I have enjoyed reading the World Prayer Band *Prayergram* that I received from one of my Christian brothers who is an evangelist. I ask that you please pray for me because I believe in the power of prayer. I'll keep you in my prayers.

*Roy, Your brother in Christ*

The sweet sovereignty of Almighty God was looking down upon this simple man when I met you at Bell

Baptist Church near Stillwell, Oklahoma, so many years ago. Your prayers are felt among us as the hand of Jehovah-Jireh leads us along the way.

As an intercessor you do not always get to see your petitions granted save through the eyes of faith, but be assured that the hand of our Lord is continually working and moving the hearts of those from whom you plead. Yesterday, as is often our practice, I gave the saints opportunity to testify for the glory of the Lord. How immeasurably sweet it is to listen to expressions of gratitude and heart-felt thanksgiving flow from those who've been touched by the Master's hand. These are not man-contrived or forced expressions, but simply the result of hearts full of the acknowledgement of divine mercy and grace at work. I know beyond doubt that you are praying for us and God is pleased to honor your labor in the closet on our behalf.

The blessed hope of our Redeemer's soon coming keeps our eyes upon the eastern sky. Many thanks for always encouraging us in the paths of true holiness.

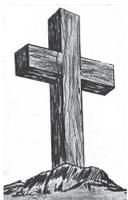
*Pastor Mike Stanley  
Friendship Baptist Church  
Highland, Arkansas*

I just completed reading your (February) *Prayergram*. How I praise the Lord for you my brother. My heart too breaks over the pride and sin of America. Even in the Church we are seeing more and more individuals take on the character of the world rather than the character of our Lord. May our Lord return soon. Blessings my brother!

*Ted Kersh, D.Min.  
South Tulsa Baptist Church  
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

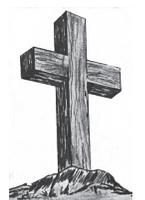
Matthew, I thank God for the day in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that I met you. Your February *Prayergram* was excellent. With your permission, I would like to have at least 200 copies made. I want to send a copy to each person I write. People need to read your February article, "America, God is not mocked."

*Gene Winfrey, Th.D.  
Founder of Antioch Bible College/Seminary*



# The WPB Ministries

**PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE — 2 Chronicles 7:14**



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