



Challenging Christians to Pray

Prayergram

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Between a Rock and a Hard Place

(What a Conundrum!)

When some Christians are prosperous and affluent, they are not always humble and godly, and when they long to be humble and godly, they are no longer prosperous and affluent; but there are exceptions of course! **What a conundrum!** Today's material boasting demonstrates the futility of a life without God in the slippery world of fluctuating materialism. **THE WORD OF GOD** says, ***“For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?”*** (PROVERBS 27:24).

No matter how secure we're financially, no matter how carefully we plan, events outside of our control can devastate us. Pick your event—a disastrous occurrence in nature, a crippling or life-threatening illness, a loss of a job, a dramatic shift in economy, or advanced technology that eliminates the need for your product and service. The list is endless.

For example, **ELIZABETH ANN SETON** was a very wealthy New Yorker. She moved in the circle of the wealthy and affluent. But unfortunately, they suffered great financial setbacks and her husband had to take bankruptcy. They left the United States and went to Europe to put their lives together. While in Europe, **ELIZABETH ANN SETON** found Christ at an altar. Jesus transforms life. When we are in a self-congratulatory mood, having accomplished all we need to accomplish. And then, wham! Beloved, God only knows what lies ahead, and the prophet Micah reminds us, ***“O man, what is good; and what doeth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*** (MICAH 6:8)

The nation of Israel prospered, but God instructed them to turn to Him with all their heart and to have no other love. Our Lord places no monetary value on our heads—only heavenly values. He only requires that we should love Him with an undivided heart. We should be humble, sincere, and aware of our fleeting ***“fame and wealth.”*** God's Word says, ***“. . . the prosperity of fools shall destroy them”*** (PROVERBS 1:32). Has any nation ever withstood prosperity? Of course, you know the answer! I was told about a lawyer who was on his deathbed in the hospital. His pastor came for a visit and finds the lawyer frantically leafing through the Bible. **What are you doing, asked his pastor? The dying lawyer replied, “I am looking for loopholes to heaven.”** It seems that many are interested in **Heaven, but not through the Cross!** Shocking, isn't it? Imagine the futility of trying to enter Heaven on a technicality by using the Bible! The Bible has endured centuries of criticism but at the end of the journey, during the last few vital breaths man is given, he can only be comforted by realizing it is Jesus Christ who died on the Cross for his sin.

But make no mistake, there will always be those who cannot accept the fact that Bible has a simple and yet powerful solution to humanity's (sin) problem. Beloved, there are no hidden agendas, no technicalities, and no loopholes with Jesus Christ. He desires the best for you, and why not **receive** His gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus? If a man lives in "**faith and obedience**" to Christ, when death comes it will not frighten or conquer him. God's Word tells us, "**O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**" (1 CORINTHIANS 15:55).

God's truth cannot be destroyed no matter how hard we try. For example, one day Voltaire (The French Atheist) said to a friend, "It took twelve ignorant fishermen to establish Christianity; I will show the world how one Frenchman can destroy it." If Christianity could have been destroyed, Voltaire was the man to do it. He was the pride of his nation. The theatres of Paris and the literary circles throughout the empire echoed his praises. Whatever he wrote was transmitted to millions of minds the world over. He was possessed of a 'photographic memory', a memory almost miraculous in its power of retention. His command of language was almost perfect. He summoned all his powers for the annihilation of Christianity.

Friend, Voltaire is dead—Christianity lives on and thrives! Surprisingly, the war against the Word of God continues. There is no doctrine so vital, so spot on—so truthful and so much under attack and scrutiny—as the doctrine of the Scriptures. No one is bigger than God and there is none like Him. God always wins—not according to our thinking or methodology, but in the end He wins. "**This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith**" (1 JOHN 5:4). **In uncertain times like NOW, we need to be certain about our faith.**

The more prosperity we enjoy, the less need for God in our daily lives. We have become too self-sufficient, too prideful to give thanks to the gracious God who puts bread on our table. The LORD has created all things for us to enjoy with a grateful heart; but we go on thinking that we have achieved great success in life because of some super wisdom and virtue of our own. That seems to be the peril we face today! God's word says, "**If riches increase, set not your heart upon them**" (PSALMS 62:10). Our wealth, our fame, and our manufactured pleasures leave us in a strange state of melancholy. The best part of one's life is not fame or wealth, but the assurance of God's tender love and implicit care, knowing that he (the believer) ultimately belongs to Christ and Christ belongs to Him. The Word of God tells us, "**But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out**" (FIRST TIMOTHY 6:6-7). Wealth is not a determining factor when it comes to godly living.

THOMAS A. KEMPIS was profound when he said, "God exists: that suffices to console the true Christian in all His disappointments; because he loves God more for His infinite perfections than for the favors he receives from Him."

The most contented people in the world are not those who clamor for "**power and prestige**," but those who "**walk humbly before their God**," and practice simple faith in Him and live by His precepts. What's the point of possessing great "**wealth and knowledge**" without the **fear of God**? When our days here on earth are done, what will we be remembered for? That we had great wealth and knew a lot of famous people and moved conspicuously among the world's most notables? As believers, we need to examine our priorities whether they are set on things of God or not. When my days here on earth are ended; I simply want to be remembered as a man who was "**obedient and faithful to God**" right up to the end, and take as many people as I can with me to heaven and enjoy life along the way. I have no regrets but **love and gratitude** for my beloved Savior whose living presence has made me glad and whole, Beloved, God does not force His favors on us; **He longs for us to ask**, and then **He is right there with all the resources of heaven at His command.** The APOSTLE

JOHN, who knew the Master well, said it this way, **“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”** (1 JOHN 5:14). The only condition is that we **“ask according to His will.”**

A life lived in obedience to God is the most fruitful life. I know some lives are so **“humbly full”**, and others are so **“proudly empty.”** The profound words of **MARTIN LUTHER** come to mind, **“I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands that I still possess.”** Amen!

Friend, do not attempt to make earthly success your goal! Make God your goal! Everything in life begins with God! I mean . . . everything!

Note: I wrote this article before the coronavirus pandemic.

—Matthew Skariah

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Culture Watch by Matthew Skariah

Are we Robots or Human Beings?

Computers and Internet are great, but are they jeopardizing our relationship with God and our common humanity? In many ways, technology has taken over our lives. Now more than ever, people are singing the praises of modern technology, not realizing that something very precious has been lost in the process, such as **human interaction and a caring spirit**. Undoubtedly, technology is a very helpful tool that is being used for the advancement of man in many ways; but at the same time, it’s also being used to **“trigger and organize”** worldwide unrest and chaos in a short period of time. If there ever a time we need **godly wisdom and mature thinking** to navigate technology properly, I believe the time is **NOW**. Someone has said, *“So far in history of the world there have never been enough mature people in the right places.”* **Tell me, please, “What’s the point of creating a great civilization, if we do not have the moral wisdom to preserve it?”** God is the greatest Preserver of life. The profound words of **HELEN GLASGOW**, American novelist come to mind, **“Not all changes are good and not all movements are forward.”** Forward thinking is much needed **NOW** without destroying the very fabric of civilization. We must learn balance and poise. When we are agitated, we cannot help anyone. Currently, we’re witnessing the **“banality of evil”** worldwide! **Let’s be kind to everyone we meet because everybody is having a hard time!**

The modern person is so enamored with his latest **“electronic toys.”** Dear friend, there is a world beyond our nose. In this culture of technology, selflessness is **“out,”** and self-gratification is **“in.”** In our **cyber-space** culture, we’re witnessing the death of **“human interaction.”** Family and friends are God’s gift to us, and in comparison to this gift everything else pales into insignificance. **Social distancing is nothing new: in fact, we have been practicing Social Distancing even before the pandemic, ignoring friends and family members by devoting our time to a machine. Many of our social problems can be solved by genuine conversation, mutual understanding, and a “heart of love and caring” and furthermore, praying for and with others.**

It is not my intention to devalue the world of things and technology and their benefits to humanity; but only reminding myself and others that **“life is not a matter of duration, but service.”** When we share our lives with others without expecting anything in return, **the blessings will come back to us in the end.** Let us ask ourselves, what is the latest computer, or megaphone, or the most expensive electronic gadgets, or wealth to us compared to our Lord, our faith, and our loved ones?

Even though, we are connected to the latest technology, we still feel at times empty, restless and rootless, like a rolling **tumbleweed**—moving, moving, and becoming extremely dizzy from the speed. The eminent psychiatrist **DR. CARL JUNG** was profound when he said, “**The central neurosis of our time is emptiness.**” People are empty because they are not connected to a spiritual consciousness and a loving relationship with Christ. Let me ask you, if society is so “**progressive and technically wired and smart,**” why in heaven don’t we use technology to create a culture where people learn to respect human life by preventing **brutality and carnage** against Christians and other minorities the world over? In my humble opinion, we are not progressing at all, in fact, we are regressing, and will continue to do so until we know and love, the source of life, God, our Creator! All lives are sacred to God.

We need to be aware of our surroundings. Whatever has happened to our common humanity? The world is full of beings, but without humanity. Jesus was human in all aspects. He identified with us; He became one of us and clothed with our humanity. Never underestimate the power of the presence of the living Christ! When someone walks by us, they should sense God’s presence in our lives, without a word being uttered. **The man who walks with God also knows God walks with him.**

The godly life of a person whose heart God has touched is like a breath of cool air in a hot summer day. I thank God for the Christians who carry the fragrance of Christ wherever they go and whatever they do. What we say and do is truly an indication of what we are. **ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON** once said, “**Worthwhile folks don’t just happen.**” As believers, we are never free from the recurring tides of various encroachments. Life is one steady encroachment after another, and only by God’s grace/mercy we are able to withstand against it. **If not TECHNOLOGY, something else will pop up to ALLURE men away from God.**

May I humbly ask, “**Are we techno-charged robots, or real human beings**” with the capacity to love and worship our God, and willing to lend a helping hand to all those in need? This week, why not write a **little note** or make a **phone call** or tell someone you’re **praying** for them and **care** about their well-being. **Friends, don’t be in a hurry! If we don’t slow down, God will do it for us!**

Lord, deliver us from the fear of man, the love of approbation, the shame of being thought of as old-fashioned and the desire to be modern and progressive! Amen!

Making Time for Prayer

Oh, how few find time for prayer in our technology-craved culture! There are many kinds of prayer, but of whatever kind, **prayer is the linking up of our soul and mind and heart to God. We have time for everything else, time to eat, time to sleep, time to read the newspaper, time to watch television, time to visit friends, time for sports, time for hobbies, time for shopping, and yet no time for PRAYER, the greatest spiritual atom known to mankind. Beloved, it is not a matter of finding time but making time for prayer.**

— Matthew Skariah

Renewal with Matthew Skariah
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DURANT, OKLAHOMA

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