

Daily Reminders for the Soul

Grace Baptist Church of Papillion

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It is impossible to overestimate the importance of a good start in the Christian walk. The earlier a young man or woman comes to know the Lord, the better! Just as important to a good start is how you finish. The Christian ought to pray that he or she would not only begin well in their pilgrimage but to finish well. To this end, we must continually live not as if we have arrived and are perfect, but forgetting what lies behind, reaching forward to what lies ahead, and pressing on to the prize and upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The following thoughts, I pray, will serve as reminders and sign posts in your life to help you not only start well, but also to finish well in the Christian battle. These thoughts are definitely not exhaustive in content or application, but serve as a spring board to further you in deeper thought, personal application and intimate prayer with your Father in heaven.

“May the Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; *and* the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.” Numbers 6: 24-26

The first area of the Christian battle you will experience is not on the battle ground, being out in the world, but in the prayer closet on your knees. If you lose the fight of personal prayer, you will lose the war out in the battle field. If you cannot overcome the sins in your heart that keep you from praying, how do you plan to defeat the barrage of other sins that lie within you, just waiting to be activated by the temptations of the world outside your prayer closet door? Before you go any further you must prepare yourself and equip your heart and mind through communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or you will be deficient in every other area of the Christian battle. The Christian finishes well by preparing well through prayer.

Prayer

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

Charles Spurgeon in reference to this verse said the following:

“God’s own people need a command to pray, otherwise they would not. How is this? Because, dear friends, we are very subject to fits of worldliness, if indeed that be not our usual state. We do not forget to be diligent in business: we do not forget to go to our beds to rest: but we often do forget to wrestle with God in prayer and to spend, as we ought to spend, long periods in consecrated fellowship with our Father and our God. Hours for the world! Moments for Christ! The world has the best, and our closet the parings of our time. We give our strength and freshness to the ways of mammon, and our fatigue and languor to the ways of God.”¹

It is not that the Christian cannot pray, it is that he will not pray. We give our strength, time, and energy to the things that matter and benefit us. Until we grasp the power, need and purpose of prayer, we will not be men or women of prayer.

¹ Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeons Sermon’s on Prayer. Page 4.

Too often we wish to run first without being equipped first. If you are going to run, battle, and persevere, you must equip yourself in prayer. It may not seem very pious to you and you may think it takes away from the more noticeable acts of the faith. But, are not the acts of faith done in silent, and only seen by God, rewarded and more pleasing to Him than those done to be noticed by man? ² Jeremiah believed that if we were to see great and mighty things, we must then pray! Great “acts” of the Christian faith are seen, heard of and still remembered because men and women spent time in silent and secluded prayer. I ask you, are you still lost in your sin? Do you need strength to fight the fight of faith? Do you need encouragement, comfort and hope? Do you have sins that burden you and are not easily cast off? Do you have fears that leave you doubting the heart and work of Jesus Christ? Then you must pray, and then you will see great and mighty things from the Lord.

Below are two more incentives to pray:

1. We have countless commands and incentives to pray. (Jeremiah 33: 3, Psalm 147: 9, Psalm 32: 6, Psalm 70: 5, Hebrews 4: 16, Luke 18: 1, Ephesians 1: 18, Colossians 1: 9)
2. He answers our prayers. (Mark 11: 24, Luke 11: 9-10, James 4: 2-3, Joel 2: 32)

Christian, you have now entered into a battle. You once were oblivious of this battle, but now you have been enlisted by a Commander who has fought the good fight already, was victorious and even now gives you all the necessary weapons you need to fight, win and overcome. You have been enlisted into the army of the Lord and no good soldier can entangle himself or herself in the everyday affairs of life.³ So, what must you first know and what must you remember about this war (The following will give you much to pray about):

What you must know:

I. You are no longer of this world

You once were of the world. You smelled, spoke, acted and were just like the world. The world and you had everything in common from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life⁴. All that the world offers is summed up in that one verse. In the things the world had to offer, you once thought true happiness, joy and life was found. However, you have now realized these things are not from the Father, but are of the world and are passing away. Now that you are no longer of the world, and have been chosen out of the world, you are no longer in the darkness, but you are the light, and this light you have received from Him, who is the light of the world and just as the darkness did not comprehend the light, so the world does not like you but hates you because it first hated

² Matthew 6: 1-4

³ 2 Timothy 2: 4

⁴ 1 John 2: 16

Him⁵. You are no longer your own, you have been purchased, bought, redeemed at an inexpressible price that can never be revoked. You no longer live for yourself, but for the glory of another, namely Jesus Christ who lives in you and the life which you now live, you live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave himself up for you.⁶ You may say, “But it is so hard, how can I keep living for Jesus?” To answer this, we are told, “to keep seeking the things above,” “fight the good fight of faith,” “fixing our eyes on Jesus, our author and perfecter of faith,” while “running with endurance the race set before us,”⁷ knowing that sin shall not be master over you. You are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, for he who has died is freed from sin.⁸ Keep fleeing the things the world has to offer you, it is perishing!

Secondly you must:

II. Count the Cost

Because you are no longer of this world, there is a cost that you must consider. You must never forget you have an enemy. He is called the “adversary, the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, but you must resist him and stand steadfast in your faith.”⁹ If the world hates you, know that it hated Him before it hated you. Nothing can come before Him. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and if you do not “deny yourself and take *up your* cross and follow after Him, *you are* not worthy of Him.” “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”¹⁰

The below excerpt, comes from the book, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, by P. Doddridge. Intermixed within this excerpt are personal thoughts from a Christian woman who is engaged in this spiritual battle:

My prayers and thoughts continue for the young ones who have become new creatures in Christ; changed forever and I want them to know that they are in a spiritual battle - the Holy Spirit has been given to the new believers as a gift and they must die to their old nature, old habits, old relationships and allow the Holy Spirit to change them to be more like Christ. Christ has instructed his disciples to EXPECT opposition and difficulties in the way to heaven. This comes from the world, remaining sin, former sinful relationships, and the adversary himself, satan. Draw upon God, the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, His word and prayer to prevail. Break bad habits - these habits cannot be broken without great difficulty. Fight the good fight of faith and remain on guard. Just when you think you have done away with an enemy it will revive and recover it's weapons and renew the assault in one form or

⁵ John 15: 19, John 8: 12, John 9: 5

⁶ Galatians 2: 20

⁷ Colossians 3: 2, 1 Timothy 6: 12, Hebrews 12:2; 12: 1

⁸ Romans 6: 14, 11, 6

⁹ 1 Peter 5: 8

¹⁰ John 15: 19, Matthew 10: 37-39

another. Some of these dangerous enemies will be in the form of pride, from a weak spirit, from a secret alienation of heart from God, to an attachment to things seen and temporal, which may be oftentimes exceedingly dangerous to your salvation. In a thousand of these instances, you must learn to deny yourself, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. Pray, repent, seek His face, ask not only for forgiveness but also that He will change you and make you more like Christ. The things of the world will hinder you one way and people of the world another. So in your walk, whether you find great aid in it or great opposition - walk by faith. Remember, that one sinner will work harder to corrupt you than ten Christians to help and secure you. They who have once been your companions in sin, will try a thousand artful methods to allure you back again to their forsaken society; some of them, perhaps, with an appearance of tender fondness and many more by ongoing ridicule. You may be insulted by those whose affection you naturally desire. I want to encourage you all to expect these things. Do not fear their mocking. This persecution you must expect. Perhaps you may be called names for no other cause than that you begin to exercise your reason to purpose in this life as you live it for Christ and will not join with those that are destroying their own souls in their wild career of folly and madness. Satan will be doing his best to discourage and distress you. He will, no doubt, raise in your imagination the most tempting ideas. He will try to discourage you from your walk of faith. He will try to get you to think that God is not good. He will perhaps try to fill you with fears and with thoughts that you are still his slave but the truth is you are now, and he knows it, the Lord's and free in Him. Don't let satan steal your power. Tell him what the Bible says: "to get behind you." You are serving and walking with Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior and that you command him to flee from you. You will find that satan will fall away from you and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you as you fight. Always be on guard until the day you die. Do not become discouraged. Jesus Christ is the captain of your salvation. Trust in the Lord always and you will be like Mount Zion which cannot be removed. Fight when your enemies press upon you. Remember you are to fight in the presence of God. Resist them steadfast in the faith and remember He can give power to the faint, and increase strength to them that have no might as we see in the Book of Judges. When temptations to sin or to doubt are the greatest, just think of Jesus who endured the cross for your rescue. Don't turn away, but press on to the end and receive your reward and crown of life."

Because our sin so easily entangles us, our adversary, the devil constantly fights against us and the world daily entices us, we easily forget that we are in a spiritual battle. A soldier may never forget their weapon, compass, water and survival gear for battle, but he may forget the strategy on how the battle must be fought and won. So, what must you remember so that you can continue to pray, flee the world and keep putting on the Lord Jesus Christ?

What you must remember:

III. Never lose sight that faith is the victory

We are told in scripture the righteous man must “live by faith.” He has been crucified with Christ, he has died to sin and has been, by the power of Christ made alive to God through Christ, having been living by sight, he is now living by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself up for him.” For there is no retreating in this battle, if we shrink back we are told “His soul takes no pleasure in us.”¹¹ We must either fight this battle or be lost in it. However, knowing and reminding oneself this battle is of faith, the soldier finds new vigor, strategy and refreshing grace from above to keep fighting.

This battle is unlike any battle in the world. You cannot depend upon your physical or mental abilities nor strength to defeat this world. But by the weapons of faith,¹² faith in the Son of God alone, can only deliver you continually and bring you to the end victoriously. Additionally the Christian must remember two things so you do not lose sight that faith is the victory:

1. Set Christ as the example always before you

As the Lord was being reviled, “He did not revile in return, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Christ is our great example of what it means to live by faith. If we are to live by faith in this evil, sin fallen, corrupt world, we too will be mistreated, ridiculed and scorned. We too must follow Christ’s pattern by entrusting ourselves to our heavenly Father who will “judge each one according to their deeds.”¹³ Christ is the pattern for us as we “look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen,” for you may ask, “why can we not set our heart on the things of this world?” “For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”¹⁴ Christ did not seek the approval of man, He did not seek the approval of the world, He did not enter into popularity contests, He knew His kingdom was not of this world and that He was to return to the Father of Glory. We must follow the pattern of Christ by being “holy for He is holy.”¹⁵ Jesus tells those who follow Him that they are blessed because they hunger and thirst for righteousness, and as we pursue holiness we know we will be the focus of ridicule, but again He reassures us that we are blessed because we have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Furthermore, the Christian is to cleanse themselves “from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” and continue to put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” Lastly, scripture is clear that “without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

¹¹ Romans 1: 17, Galatians 2:20, Hebrews 10:38

¹² Ephesians 6: 10-18

¹³ 1 Peter 2: 23, Revelation 20: 13

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 4: 18

¹⁵ 1 Peter 1: 16

¹⁶ Praise God, that we do not need to rest on our own strength in these areas of battle, but we have a Savior, Jesus Christ who continual intercedes for His children, pouring out strength and grace to those who ask. Meditate on these passages and find in them the richness of Christ as your pattern, hope, and strength.

Furthermore, continue in the pattern of love. Let the love of Christ influence your conduct and temper towards each other, and towards all who love “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Lay aside all contention about little indifferent matters, and doubtful uncertain questions. Be on the watch of self-righteousness, and pharisaical judgment. You should be the chief of sinners, as far as you’re concerned. “Receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” Let this tenderness of Christ be your daily pattern and you yourself be upright, cheerful, sincere and in love serve one another.¹⁷

2. Set the scriptures before you Daily

Why make scripture your daily bread? Because “they testify of Him.”¹⁸ It is within the sacred book, the scriptures where we find the life, death and resurrection of “God made manifest in the flesh,”¹⁹ and the claims, encouragements, and support, which the Spirit of God, speaking of the salvation of Christ, furnishes our souls. The scriptures testify of Him, and it is our great aim and goal to be made and conformed to His image, only the scriptures along with the Holy Spirit guide and direct us to this end. We must daily, nightly, weekly, monthly and yearly meditate, ponder, and feast upon the Word of God. The Word of God must go with us every place we go, as the blind are dependent upon the beast to lead and guide them from one destination to the next, so too in an even greater way we must let the Scriptures be our guide safely through trials and onward to glory.

Do not forget the simple, yet profound passage that Paul wrote to young Timothy, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” This verse encompasses everything we need to live a life of faith and godliness. Do not look anywhere else, but feed off every word in the Holy Scriptures and then your life will be pure, straight and on the narrow path that leads to the celestial city.²⁰

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Numbers 6: 24-26

¹⁶ Matthew 5: 6, 10, 2 Corinthians 7: 1, Hebrews 12: 14

¹⁷ A Manual for the Young- A Practical, Exposition of Proverbs 1-9. Bridges

¹⁸ John 5: 39

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 3: 16

²⁰ 1 Timothy 3: 16, Luke 4: 4, Psalm 119: 9-11, Matthew 7: 13-14