

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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PRAYING FOR POLITICIANS

Joseph Stalin, who killed millions of his fellow Russians because of his paranoid obsession with power, scoffed at a colleague who warned that the Pope was likely to denounce one of Stalin's barbaric plans. 'The pope,' he sneered, 'How many divisions does he have?'¹ This is an example of how many people see religion in general and Christianity in particular. The church is irrelevant. The church has no influence. The church has no impact on the world. Whatever impact it might have is negative. The church is not among the movers and shakers of this world - and, according to Stalin, that is because it has no army. But now consider the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1,2 "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." Paul implies that the church can have a tremendous impact upon the world!

"Restraining prayer we cease to fight; prayer makes the Christian's armour bright; And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." Cowper

The church can have a tremendous impact upon the world but notice what we must do: we must look beyond the halls of power here on earth and go directly to the throne room of the universe and there offer our petitions on behalf of our nation and our world. Go directly to the King of Kings to pray for your king, Paul says to the believer. Praying for politicians is the subject we want to consider in this article.

THE CONTEXT OF PRAYER FOR POLITICIANS

Paul's exhortation that we pray for politicians is not the sum total of what the Scripture has to say to us concerning our relationship with those in authority over us. What does the Scripture have to say then about the place of prayer for politicians in the larger scheme of the Christian life?

PRAYER IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTION

Paul makes it very clear that we are to be like the Lord Jesus. He is described as One who preeminently went about doing good (Acts 10:38). Lepers, bereaved widows, blind men and hungry crowds were happy to be around Him for He did them good. 'Go, and do likewise,' we are told (Luke 10:37). In fact, as we have opportunity, we are to 'do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith' (Galatians 6:10). In this sin sick and suffering world Christians are to 'do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with (their) God' (Micah 6:8). In light of such texts we are not simply to pray for politicians but we are to be actively involved in doing good in society. This 'doing good' will take a myriad of forms. Christians will be involved in the political realm itself as politicians and seek to promote justice and good in that way. We will be involved in philanthropic efforts - so many benevolent and beneficial institutions have been founded by Christians. Schools, universities, orphanages, and prison ministries - the list goes on and on. Philanthropic endeavours Christians ought to initiate and support would include crisis pregnancy centers and adoption agencies. It is one thing to decry the evil of abortion; it is another to put time, money, and volunteer hours, into the fine work of such ministries.

Furthermore, Christians in Canada ought to avail themselves of the opportunity to let their voices be known through letter writing campaigns and various avenues of protest. Bills are before Parliament that fly in the face of Biblical revelation and flagrantly dismiss the claims and commands of God. Let Christians arise and cry aloud. Pray we must! But in this country we still have freedom to speak and write and protest (unlike many of our brethren throughout the world). Let us avail ourselves of these freedoms and speak out against forces that would promote the abomination of homosexuality and destroy the traditional family. The point is this: to say that Christians ought to pray is not to say that they ought not to do things that will promote the good and the just in society. Did Mr. Trudeau desire a 'just society'? So do we. And we will work for it.

PRAYER GOES HAND IN HAND WITH SUBMISSION AND RESPECT

Do you recall some of the salient points in Paul's exhortations in Romans 13:1-7? Obey the government because God put them in authority over you (verses 1-5). Pay your taxes and import duties, for the same reason (verse 6,7). Be respectful and give honour to those in governmental authority. Do you recall what Peter said? Submit to those who in authority over you (1 Peter 2:13). Show respect for everyone and show respect for the king (2:17). It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with the implications of these texts for the notions of revolutions and coups, but we can think about our own conduct. How do I measure up in light of these clear commands? As they observe my attitude toward the rules of the road, is it apparent to my children that I have respect for the government and that I am submissive to their regulations? Do my business practice and the way I fill out my income tax similarly reflect a respectful and submissive attitude? Does the way I speak about our prime minister and the members of parliament show that my conversation is influenced by these texts? Remember,

God places them there in authority just as surely as He placed Nero in his position as emperor in Paul's day! I suspect that we are as disobedient to the laws of the land and disrespectful of the rulers of the land as we are negligent to pray for those same people. I believe there is a connection.

PRAYER SHOWS THE CONVICTION THAT SOCIETY MUST BE CHANGED FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

What is the best thing we can do for the leaders of our land? We can pray for them! What is the best thing we can do for our country? We can pray for them! How forgetful Christians can be of that fundamental truth. In 1985, after Congress had failed to pass his legislative agenda, a prominent New Right leader declared: 'The only way to have a genuine spiritual revival is to have legislative reform...I think we have just been legislated out of the possibility of a spiritual revival.'² This is wrong-headed and un-biblical. If society is going to change it must be changed from the insider out. People must be converted, politicians must be saved, and sinners must be won to Christ. The historian J. Wesley Bready, in a book entitled *England before and after Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform*, described the 'deep savagery of much of 18th Century England' and says that the 'evangelical revival did more to transfigure the moral character of the general populace than any other movement British history can record.'³ Wesley and the leaders of the revival "restored to a nation its soul"! Examples like this could be multiplied. But the point is this: whatever involvement individual Christians might have in the politics of our day, the church must ever be faithful to its primary task, that of preaching the gospel to all the world and seeking to make all men disciples of Christ. And, the church must be faithful to pray for that kind of turn-around. No wonder Paul speaks with urgency: 'Therefore I exhort first of all' - do you see the passion? I exhort and I urge you to do this! Now first of all, in terms of priority, you

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FAMILIES IN FOCUS

MAN AND GOD IN RELATIONSHIP - PART 5



The administration of the covenant has always been fraught with difficulties for man. It concerns the relationship between a transcendent God and a finite creature, and that on the basis of the mediatorial work of Christ. God is sovereign in the administration of His grace and sinful man has no right or power to bind God neither to bestow His grace nor to dictate to God how He ought to grant that grace.

In our last article, we saw that during Old Testament times, the prophets told of the New Covenant and its inclusion of believer's children and the benefits for them. These prophecies are verified in the New Testament as well. "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38, 39 "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy." We see, then, that children belong to the covenant community and its administration, with its promises, warnings, and obligations.

At the risk of characterization, which is not my intention at all, I hope to demonstrate some of the main dilemmas that people face in seeking to understand the status of children of the covenant. There is the danger on one side that we can make too much of the covenant and the danger on the other side that we make too little of it. You see, man can outwardly conform to the stipulations of the covenant while the heart remains unaffected by the grace that God gives in covenant terms. But it is also possible to miss the covenant grace that God communicates to men by not receiving the promises of the gospel

as they are offered to us in the gospel for want of experiencing God's grace in a way that we think we need to experience it. Either way results in a misconception of the covenant of grace. A third area that brings difficulty is the realisation of God's grace. His objective promises, as His truth, is firm and unshakable.

The danger of making too much of the covenant of grace flows from the desire to glorify God's faithfulness to His promises. This, of course, is noble in itself and it is sin to give any hint to the blasphemous idea that God would ever be unfaithful to His word in not fulfilling His promises. But what does God promise to men in the terms of the covenant of grace?

Some say that God promises His people, who are His by covenant, salvation with all its attendant blessings. But what happens when a covenant member proves by his life and death that he was destitute of saving grace? Did God not promise such a salvation that could forgive and cleanse this sinner? Or was God unfaithful to his promises? Surely, God does not promise directly to save certain sinners. There is no promise in scripture that God will save any particular person. The Westminster Confession of Faith accurately states that "God...promiseth and giveth His Holy Spirit to all His elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces."

The question can then be entertained, "Doesn't the covenant promise salvation to those who are the recipients of its administration?" The answer to this dilemma lies in the fact that the covenant blessings are secured to all the elect in Christ. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Christ. Therefore, God brings all those who are elect in Christ to faith in Christ, Himself. This is according to God's

covenant purposes with all the elect. But doesn't God promise to all the covenant community that they are elect to salvation? No. The covenant promises that all the elect will be brought to salvation. But hasn't God included the seed of believers in the covenant community? Yes, He has. Has He not then given them the promises of salvation? Here we must be careful in our articulation of this doctrine. Some would call this mere semantics, but we believe that this is crucial to our understanding of covenant administration. God has, as we have seen, included the children of believers into the covenant community. The promise He gives to covenant children is salvation in Christ. He does not promise them salvation, but He promises them salvation in Christ. This salvation they receive through faith in Him, a faith that God sovereignly works in them. When covenant children turn from their sin to God in Christ, He promises to receive them.

Our Baptist brothers tell us that if this is the case then there is fundamentally no difference between covenant children and all those outside the covenant community. For, they say, God promises in the Gospel to receive all that come to Christ for salvation and that all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. It is true that all, who call on His name will be saved, be he a Jew or Gentile, a church member or a pagan. But there are privileges given to covenant children. First, and of greatest importance, is that they are brought up under the sound of the gospel. This is no small privilege. Romans 3:1 But to these children belong also the sign and the seal of the covenant. See Genesis 17:9-14. The covenant sign and seal tell the covenant member that God has set him apart in order to be His God and that he is set apart to serve God. The sign and seal also visibly express God's faithfulness to His covenant promises, and confirms to the individual that God will also deal faithfully with him, personally, in covenant. God has come to the covenant child with His promises. The blessings of the covenant can only be experienced through faith, but God is

faithful to His covenant promises.

To summarise then, we need to say that God includes children of believers in the covenant community to share in its blessings. Inclusion in the covenant community does not make salvation automatic and the sign and seal of the covenant is administered to the children because of divine command and not on the basis of a presupposed faith. Rather than presupposing faith, covenant children that are baptised are required to exercise faith in the promises. This requirement does not necessarily mean that they will exercise faith for only God in His sovereign grace grants faith. Yet the terms of covenant relationship with God brings His promises very near to the children. God puts them in the way of salvation, and tells them to walk in His ways and to trust Him in His Word, promising that as they do they will experience His salvation.

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties for man lies in the fact that God's dealing with man covenantally precludes any automatic fulfillment of the promises. It requires that man go to God in faith, using the means that God has ordained. Our natural unbelief and disobedience get in our way of experiencing these blessings. Yet, God will bring about the salvation of all the elect. He has not told us who the elect are, but He has told us how he brings His people to salvation. It is the dependant use of the means that He has ordained that we naturally balk at. We do not trust that God has our best interests at heart. We deceive ourselves into thinking that if we conform to God's covenant as best we can that somehow, God is then obligated to save us. Oh, for a greater understanding of His grace. To receive so much from God in the promises and yet to be so destitute of anything in us to ensure that God will grant us the fulfillment of His covenant, creates a great tension in our minds. May God enable us to trust Him for salvation and to live for Him in His terms.

- Bill Kroesbergen

YOUTH'S CORNER

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS - WORD SEARCH

Find the bolded words, forward, backward, up, down or diagonally in the grid provided. The left over letters spell out information about the author of the hymn.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?-
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,-
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In his arms he'll take and shield thee,
Thou will find a solace there.

R	J	O	S	O	C	T	A	K	E	S	U	A	C	E	B	S	L	S
E	U	E	F	A	F	P	T	S	H	I	E	L	D	G	S	F	A	N
F	H	O	R	S	O	T	I	C		C	U	M	B	E	R	E	D	I
U	R	R	I	H	R	P	E				I	V	L	L	P	I	E	S
G	Y	E	E	V	S	S	F	N		N	W	D	R	I	E	R	N	O
E	E	A	N	E	A	U	R	T		B	E	A	R	V	A	G	E	T
H	V	R	D	R	K	S	O	I		E	S	U	O	I	C	E	R	P
Y	A	M	S	A	E	E	F	G	N	I	H	T	Y	R	E	V	E	H
Y	H	S	M	C	N	J	T	A	H	W	N	I	A	P	D	A	O	L

Message: _____

BOOKS IN REVIEW

This book is subtitled *Daily Bible Readings for Husbands and Wives*. It is a series of short studies on almost 200 passages from the Bible selected from Genesis to Revelation in sequence. In each study the teaching of the Scripture is related to marriage and the home.

Heirs Together of Life
 by Charles and Norma Ellis
Banner of Truth Trust
 275 pages

This book covers the whole range of Biblical teaching it is not merely a presentation of a few selected ideas about the Christian home. It's practical teaching places all the emphasis on God's wisdom rather than on human insights. It exhorts married couples to enjoy a truly open-hearted Christian marriage and home life. It gives direction on how these blessings can be brought about. It not only communicates to married couples but helps them communicate.

The Bible teaches that marriage is to be honoured. This book points out how in the midst of a world that has dishonoured God and his creation, a Christian couple may display that honour. It shows how they can know the true meaning of being "together" and be heirs of the life that Christ so graciously gives.

-submitted by Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

THE DOOR OPENS IN QUÉBEC - PART 2 OF 2

Bernard Westerveld, Jr. continues to discuss the history of Protestant missionary efforts in Quebec and the ongoing need to share the gospel there. (Original source: New Horizons, June 2001)

L'ÉGLISE RÉFORMÉE DU QUÉBEC

The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s not only gave rise to new political parties, but also fed a Protestant revival in Québec. People left the Church of Rome in search of something else. Many embraced the self-religions of hedonism and postmodernism. Others joined various cults. But the Lord also called many to faith in Christ!

The renewed mission effort of the 1970s to the French-speaking Quebecers came largely through evangelical churches-Baptist, Brethren, and Pentecostal-and parachurch groups such as the Navigators. Their efforts showed slow, yet steady, growth throughout the seventies and into the early eighties. For the first time in their life, people opened the Word of God and read for themselves the truths of God's grace. One member of the church recounted to me that when she first opened her Bible, she feared that she would be burned or struck by lightning! Such fear had been instilled in her by the Roman Catholic clergy, who had refused the Bread of Life to their parishioners.

In the midst of this Protestant revival, a desire was growing for faithful biblical teaching according to the Reformed confessions. Many new believers realized that they needed a more solid grounding in the totality of biblical teaching. They sought out Presbyterian and Reformed pastors to instruct them.

As a result, to the existing work of the PCC in Québec were added the mission efforts of the

Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). In the late 1970s, these missions worked together to establish a single French-speaking Reformed church. Much work needed to be done. Eventually the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism were adopted as confessional standards. A church order was written up.

The CRC and the PCA supported the formation of a separate French-speaking denomination, and continued their Québec missionary projects. The PCC, however, did not extend its blessing. Because of their own doctrinal pluralism and their desire for a nationwide Presbyterian church, they did not agree with the formation of a separate French-speaking denomination that was biblical and confessional. The congregation of St. Mark, at that time a part of the PCC, voted to leave the PCC and join the new French-speaking Reformed church. That cost them their church building, to which the PCC laid claim.

Finally, on November 6, 1988, all the work culminated in a glorious celebration of God's faithfulness in the historic Château Frontenac in Québec City! L'Église réformée du Québec was officially inaugurated for the glory of God in Québec!

THE ERQ TODAY

The years following the inauguration were difficult for the ERQ, as they were for all Protestants in Québec. The numerical growth of the seventies and early eighties nearly ceased. Few new converts came to the churches. A time of testing and maturing was granted by the Lord. Two local congregations closed. Another rejoined the CRC. One new church plant was started. Several elders were

ordained. Differing visions of a Presbyterian and Reformed church produced tension. The difficulties facing small churches discouraged many. But couples married, babies were baptized, and the Lord remained faithful.

Presently the ERQ is composed of six local congregations, with a total membership of about 300. Again, they are a very small number who seek to submit faithfully to the Word of God.

The ERQ remains a mission work supported by the prayers and financial gifts of other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations, which even send preachers of the Word. Support continues to come from the PCA, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the United Reformed Churches, and the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Our pastors come from English Canada, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, and we praise God for three French-speaking Québec pastors.

The challenge before the Protestant churches in Québec is huge. After nearly thirty years of evangelism, less than 0.5% of the Québec population is Protestant. The Roman Catholic Church can claim around 86% of the population, but the vast majority are nonpracticing. Organized religion is out. The spiritualism of the New Age movement is sweeping into the void.

Quebecers are very resistant to the gospel of grace. One of our pastors has described Montreal, the most influential center of Québec thinking and practice, as a mixture of the postmodernism of Paris and the materialism of New York. That translates into very hard soil in which to plant the gospel.

At the same time, Québec is also suffering many social ills. Divorce, remarriage, and marital infidelity are all too common. Abortion, common-law marriage, and homosexuality are socially acceptable—more so than elsewhere in Canada. Drunkenness, pornography, and

gambling are increasing. Suicide, especially among young people, has increased dramatically. When the Roman Catholic Church was in the ascendancy, its moral chains at least restrained many sins. Having thrown off the yoke of Rome, most Quebecers have turned to the self-centered life of hedonism.

One of the paramount challenges facing the ERQ is to pass the faith to the next generation. Many of our members were converted as young people during the seventies. Now their children are growing up and need to profess their own faith. They need to learn the truths of Scripture and our Reformed confessions. They need to embrace Christ as their covenant Lord and to follow him obediently by faith.

As always, the gospel must be proclaimed in this mission field. Is Québec a more needy mission field than any other? Not likely. But without a doubt, too few Quebecers have heard the truth of the Word of God. Too few have heard of the hope of redemption through grace by faith alone. Many live with the deceptions of the Church of Rome or with popular media misconceptions and caricatures. We need ambassadors of Jesus Christ sent to proclaim the gospel in the French language.

You say you do not know what God's will is. I'll tell you what it is. First, that you know Christ and then that your neighbours hear about Christ. That is His will. So often we sit around twiddling our thumbs, dreaming about God's will in some far distant future when we are not even willing to stand up on our own two feet, walk down the street, and do God's will right now. God so desired that men be saved that He gave the One whom He loved most, His Son, and sent Him to die on a cross. That is the measure of His love, and that indicates how much He wills that men be saved!

-John MacArthur, Jr. in *Found: God's Will*

PRAYING FOR POLITICIANS

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

must pray for these people! This is terribly important. And no wonder, since the face of a nation can be changed only when the heart of a nation is changed. And God alone can do that. So, pray!

PRAYER INDICATES CONFIDENCE THAT GOD IS ABLE TO DO MIGHTY THINGS.

Paul encourages prayer because he is convinced that God is almighty and thus able to bring about radical change. When we pray for kings we remember that God is King of Kings. When we pray for powerful men we remember that to God the 'nations are as a drop in the bucket, and are counted as small dust on the scales; look He lifts up the isles as a very little thing' (Isaiah 40:15). He puts presidents in power and He brings prime ministers down. Our Lord said to Pilate, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above' (John 19:11). While wars and rumours of

wars whirl about us how comforting to remember that God 'causes wars to cease throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear in two; He burns the shield with fire' (Psalm 46:9). We remember that the oft quoted 'be still and know that I am God' is not spoken in the context of a beautiful pastoral scene but rather amidst the clash and clang of sabre rattling nations who are being told to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Almighty God. God can and will do His will in the world. This is our God! "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (verse 11).

-Written by Carl Muller
(to be continued)

- 1 Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, (US, Zondervan, 1987), p. 194.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 234.
- 3 John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, UK, Marshalls Paperbacks, 1984), p. 3.

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