
Words of Truth

May The Lord...

By: Brian A. Yeager

A few months ago I received an email that ended with this statement: “May the Lord give us strength to do faithfully do his will always”! That statement got me thinking of how many times, in the past, I have heard prayers and statements that include “may the Lord...” or “Lord let us do...”. Have you considered how ignorant of a statement that is in much of the ways it is used?

We all know and generally agree that God has given mankind freewill (Genesis 2:15-3:19, Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Joshua 24:14-16, Ecclesiastes 7:29, Acts 2:37-41, Philippians 2:12, etc.). In other words, God is not sitting in Heaven and controlling our thoughts and actions. He allows us to think and act on our own. If you want to die today, you can commit suicide. He will not stop you (Matthew 27:1-5). If you want to do right today in each thing you do, God will not hinder you from doing so (James 1:13-16). The choice is yours!

I have not met too many people who would or have disagreed with the truths above. Yet, I have met many who agree with those points, but then act as though they don't. For example, a man is leading a congregation in prayer for the Lord's Supper and he says this in the prayer: “Lord, we pray that we may partake of this in a manner well-pleasing in thy sight...”. Now let's consider that statement for a moment. Is God going to prevent you from partaking of the Lord's Supper in a proper manner? No! Is He going to help you do it right? No! We know this because God has given us the instructions on how to rightly partake of the Lord's Supper and in those instructions has commanded US to partake aright (i.e. I Corinthians 11:18-34).

Another thing I have heard in public prayer is when someone says: “Lord, we pray that we may use the monies collected today to glorify you and to further your cause...” Question: Do you have authority to take a collection for any other reason? NO! We are to take a collection on the first day of the week to fund the Lord's work (I Corinthians 16:1-4). Everything we do, including using His money, is to be by His authority (Colossians 3:17). So, why would you ask Him to help you obey the commands He has already given? Furthermore, if you really believe He will somehow help you do aright whose fault is it then when you do wrong? Again, what of the freewill we all agree that we have? Don't we have to think before we speak?

Thoughtless Words

God has warned us many times about speaking without thinking things through (Proverbs 13:3, Proverbs 17:27-28, Proverbs 18:6-7, Proverbs 18:21, Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, and Matthew 12:33-37). In fact, God warns us not to talk too much at all (Proverbs 10:19). Our words can be very destructive (James 3:1-18). There is no way that a person who believes in freewill and understands it would say some of the things we have all heard and possibly said in the past. That

is, unless we/they are speaking without thinking these things through. That seems to be the big problem.

If a thinking person heard me say, “May the Lord give me_____”; they will conclude that I believe God is going to give me what I asked for. That is reasonable. Why would you ask for something you do not believe is possible to receive? In fact, as Christians, we know we are only to pray things that are in accordance with the will of God (I John 5:14-15). Thus, when we are asking for something that necessarily infers we believe it is in God’s will to grant that thing we are asking for.

If a person asks God to: “help me do this in a way pleasing in thy sight”, they are asking God to intervene wherein they may be doing something wrong. Consider a few things about that. Before we act, aren’t we supposed to already know that action is in accordance with God and will be pleasing in His sight (II Samuel 7:1-7, Luke 6:46, and Ephesians 5:10)? Secondly, if I am asking for God (or anyone) to help me do something right doesn’t that infer that I am unsure about the action I am engaging in? What does that then mean?

It Is Sinful To Act When Unsure Of What We’re Doing

In a context dealing with authorized freedoms, the Lord had Paul write this: “*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Romans 14:23). Solomon, through inspiration, wrote this: “*It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry*” (Proverbs 20:25). Clearly, we can see that if we do something we are unsure of we have committed a sinful act even if what we are doing is right in the end. We have to KNOW that our actions are correct BEFORE we engage in those things. To act and then expect God to come in and clean up our sinful actions later is abundantly ignorant on many levels.

God wants us to take time before speaking or acting to test all things and hold fast to the good (I Thessalonians 5:21). When king Saul acted outside of God’s authority and then later tried to excuse and atone for his actions, God was unreceptive (I Samuel 15:1-35). Consider that for a while. Things in the Old Testament are there for us to learn from (I Corinthians 10:1-12). Examples such the unauthorized fire offered by Nadab and Abihu teaches us not to act outside of what God has authorized (Leviticus 10:1-2). Those examples also show us that God will certainly allow you to err and then punish you afterward. He will not step in and prevent you from doing the wrong thing. Our actions need to confirm that we know these things?

Conclusion

The Lord is not going to give us strength to do His will always. He commands us to be strong (I Corinthians 16:13; cf. Proverbs 24:10). We can choose strength or weakness (Hebrews 12:1-3). Our strength comes through Christ (Philippians 4:13), but not supernaturally. Our strength through the Lord comes by us putting on the things He has given us to equip us to be strong (Ephesians 6:10-17). This is true of all of God’s will. He expects us to study, learn, and apply His word (II Timothy 2:15). God will not remote control your actions or words!

Milkshakes

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

By: Brian A. Yeager

Paul wrote an epistle to Titus that covered many things. One of those items was why he [Paul] left Titus in Crete. The reason was to appoint qualified elders (Titus 1:5-9). One of the reasons elders were so needful was to fight off the falsehoods being spread. Notice what Paul wrote concerning that: *“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. **They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate”* (Titus 1:10-16).

In what we just read we can see that some people were [are] guilty of saying one thing, but living an entirely different way than they proclaim. This is known as “hypocrisy”. We are taught of God that we need to live in a way wherein we serve as a good example for others to follow (Matthew 5:14-16 and Philippians 2:14-16). Our behavior ought to be seen as holy and just (I Thessalonians 2:10).

As Paul continued his epistle to Titus, he went on to write this: *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. **In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works:** in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”* (Titus 2:1-8).

Even when a person cannot be converted to Christ by the powerful word of God (Hebrews 4:12), your example may be all it takes to turn them to the Lord (I Peter 3:1-4). Doesn't that say a lot about how your actions are noticed by others? Even evangelists whom are instructed to preach the word (II Timothy 4:2), have to lay a greater importance on living the message they preach (I Timothy 4:12-16). A person who teaches something they do not live is an abomination to our Lord (Romans 2:1-29).

Allowing your actions to be a loud message is so important that we cannot even begin to teach others without first living aright ourselves (Matthew 7:1-5). Thus, we know we have to do more than just talk the talk (I John 2:3-6). Each one of us should be able to tell people to follow our example as we have followed Christ in our lives (I Corinthians 11:1). Live aloud the will of our Lord for others to see. Just make sure your faithful example is not just a show!