

THE WITNESS OF GOD

Over fifty years ago I found this outline of the book of Romans. It is laid out like a road map:

Introduction: Romans 1:1-18

Condemnation Corner: Romans 1:19-3:20

Justification Junction: Romans 3:21-5:11

Sanctification Square: Romans 5:12-8:39

Dispensation Detour: Romans 9:1-11:36

Glorification Gardens: Romans 12:1-15:33

Conclusion: Romans 16:1-27

Not following the above outline, I just want to address the following thoughts.

Text: Romans 1:1-17

Romans 1:9a: "For God is my witness...." I John 5:9: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

The word "witness" is translated from μάρτυς (martyr); this word can be translated as "record," "witness" or "martyr." Martyr came to mean someone who dies for their beliefs, as the original sense of "martyr" was a legal witness who could testify even if it meant facing death for their testimony.

Hebrews 9:11-26; 1 John 5:7, 8: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

I. THE PERSISTENCE OF SPECIFIC PRAYER

Romans 1:9b: "...without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."

The word "mention," is translated from μνησία (mneia) and can be translated "recollection," "remembrance," or "recital." One of my earliest memories is going to my sister's and brother's piano recitals. Years later I attended our children's and finally our grandchildren's recitals. Recitals are basically pieces of music that the students have learned and practiced and practiced until recital. Here the Lord is using Paul to refer to those oft

repeated prayers that we pray. Jesus warned against vain or empty repetitions. Matthew 6:7: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” It is not the repetitions that offend God, it is the vain or empty repetitions. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” In the Greek tense it means ask and keep asking; seek and keep seeking; knock and keep knocking.

Two things often break down our efficiency in prayer:

1) Unanswered Prayer

This is the prayer that tempts us to stop praying because of the lack of results.

2) Answered Prayer

When we see God answer prayer so beautifully, we sometimes have a tendency to coast on the momentum of how God came through. In Leviticus 6:13, God said, “The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.” The Lord revealed in Leviticus 6:10 one of the things that puts the fire out: “And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.” Ashes were yesterday’s wood or fuel. If we try to live off the answered prayers of yesterday, we will smother the fire. We need fresh fuel for today if we are to keep the proverbial fire going. Thank God for the witness of the Lord in persistent prayers.

There is no limit to what a Christian can experience who practices persistent praying. It is well illustrated by the incredible and miraculous testimony of Barbara Snyder in the community of Wheaton, outside of Chicago. Barbara was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at the Mayo Clinic and for the next several years her health deteriorated. It got worse and worse with repeated hospitalizations, repeated surgeries, until ultimately, she was dying. She was put into hospice at her home. One of her physicians, Dr. Harold P. Adolf, a board certified surgeon who had performed 25,000 operations in his career called Barbara, “One of the most hopelessly ill patients I ever saw.” Another of Barbara’s doctors, Dr. Thomas Marshall, an internist for 30 years said that what happened to Barbara was medically impossible. Allow me to share this with you as I read it from *The Case For Miracles* by Lee Strobel.

II. THE PATIENCE WITH THE END IN VIEW

Romans 1:11: "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." Hebrews 10:36: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Romans 5:3: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

Notice the ending of a life lived for the satisfaction of the flesh. Proverbs 5:11: "And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed." And here is the ending of a life run by substance abuse. Proverbs 23:32: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Please observe the contrast in Psalm 37:37: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." Proverbs 4:18: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Galatians 6:9: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

III. THE POWER WITHIN THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a man in dire need of a Savior. He got into an altercation with four men at one time; only one survived to tell the story. He was worth 1.5 million dollars when the Civil war began. He had made his living by slave trading. He was the only man in the conflict who started out as a private and became a Lt. General by the end of the war. William Tecumseh Sherman declared that Tennessee would never be safe as long as "that devil Forrest" was alive and that they had to kill him "even if it takes 10,000 men and bankrupts the Federal treasury." Fierce in battle, Forrest killed 31 men in hand-to-hand combat, and had 30 horses shot out from under him during the course of the war. He rightly joked that he ended up "one horse ahead" by war's end. It was said that Ulysses S. Grant claimed to fear no man on earth...except Nathan Bedford Forrest. He was ruthless. He was tried for what was later called the Massacre of Fort Pillow. Although he was personally found not guilty, it hung over his head like a sword of Damocles. At the end of the war he was broke with only ten dollars to his name. He helped form the original Ku Klux Klan, becoming the first Grand Wizard thus forever cementing his reputation as the epitome of Southern racism. After Forrest saw the direction of the Klan, he resigned and urged the others to cease and desist, but although disbanding for awhile they re-organized without Forrest into a hateful and, at times,

murderous organization. Nathan Bedford Forrest had a godly praying mother and equally virtuous and praying wife. He eventually repented of his sins and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He was gloriously converted! In 1875, Forrest was invited to speak to a black civil rights group called the Pole-Bearers Association, a forerunner for today's NAACP. Forrest addressed the black people in love saying, "I came here with the jeers of some white people, who think that I am doing wrong. I believe I can exert some influence, and do much to assist the people in strengthening fraternal relations, and shall do all in my power to elevate every man, to depress none. I want to elevate you to take positions in law offices, in stores, on farms, and wherever you are capable of going. I came to meet you as friends, and welcome you to the white people. I want you to come nearer to us. When I can serve you I will do so. We have but one flag, one country; let us stand together. We may differ in color, but not in sentiment. Many things have been said about me which are wrong, and which white and black persons here, who stood by me through the war, can contradict. Go to work, be industrious, live honestly and act truly, and when you are oppressed I'll come to your relief. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for this opportunity you have afforded me to be with you, and to assure you that I am with you in heart and in hand." This is the power of the Gospel.

-Pastor Pope-