



MINUTES WITH MESSIAH

Volume 14, Issue 10

Web Site: <http://www.minuteswithmessiah.com>

August 2013

THANK YOU

Have you ever heard a little child pray? Not one that has gone to church for a few years and heard a lot of adult prayers. A little child just learning to pray. Unlike most adults, who tend to pray “gimme” prayers, small children pray almost exclusively “thank you” prayers. They thank God for their family members (listing them each individually, including the pets), for their food (often item by item), for houses, toys, and other blessings, and sometimes for Jesus. That is the whole prayer. It is only as one gets older and hears adult prayers that a child starts adding in the requests, maybe the confessions, and only occasionally the praises. In that order, since that is the frequency of these things in most adult prayers.

It is not wrong to add these other things to our prayers. In fact, we are commanded to “let your requests be made known unto God.” (Php 4:6) In the Psalms, David modeled praise prayers to God. We should acknowledge our sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn 1:9) Nevertheless, sometimes we adults should pray more like children, rather than expecting them to pray like us.

Jesus was a thankful prayer. Every time the gospels mention his giving thanks, it is in relation to food, but if we don’t thank God for our food we are not likely to thank him for other things. One time it is even pointed out after the fact. “Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks.” (Jn 6:23) It seems that John considered the giving of thanks of equal or greater importance than the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Either that, or he is stating that the miracle would not have happened had Jesus not given thanks.

Paul was a thankful person. He made a point of telling the Ephesians, Colossians, and Thessalonians (twice) that he thanked God for them. Paul even thought that thanksgiving was so important that when another person gave thanks to God, those around him should understand and acknowledge that thanks. In his discussion of speaking in human languages not learned in the normal way, he said:

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned

say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. (1 Cor 14:16-17)

Even in the matter of food, Paul considered giving thanks to be of supreme importance. He acknowledged that the gentiles could eat any food (not just kosher food) as long as they gave thanks for that food. (Rom 14:6; 1 Tim 4:4) If they did not give thanks, then, no food would be truly beneficial to them.

Even our confession of sin, perhaps, should be in the form of thanksgiving. We often ask God to forgive our sins, even though he has promised that they are already forgiven. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 Jn 1:7) If the blood of Jesus continually cleanses our sin, as is implied in the original Greek, then perhaps we should more often thank God that he has already forgiven us, instead of reminding him of sins which he has already forgotten.

It has been proposed that if we ask God multiple times for something, we should thank him at least as many times when we receive it. Thanksgiving, in America, tends to be reserved for the fourth Thursday in November. God seems to expect it every time we speak to him. Making requests, and even praising God, are important aspects of prayer. We must not make thanks giving any less important.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col 3:17)

CONTENTS

Thank You	1
Haters Gonna Hate	2
What Is It?	4

All articles Copyright 2013 by Tim O’Hearn unless otherwise noted

HATERS GONNA HATE

The billboard from a prominent anti-religious group said “Keep your religion out of my government.” I wanted to sneak up there some night and tag it with, “As long as you keep your government out of my religion.” (But, of course, that would have been illegal.) The concept of the sign, though, was based on the faulty understanding of “the establishment of religion.” When the founding fathers wrote the Bill of Rights, they did not object to the establishment (noun) which is religion; they objected to the establishment (verb) of a state-sponsored religion. Religion could be, and was and is, a part of everyday life, including life in the halls of government. It could not be a state sponsored religion at the exclusion of all others. Prayers could be said at government meetings. Religious symbols could appear on government buildings. The government could not interfere with religion, and it could not favor one religion over another. Religion was a personal choice that the government could not interfere with. That was what was meant by the separation of church and state.

But that is not what this article is about. Another sign, advertising a church sermon, used a variation on that theme. It read: Separation of church and hate. The church need not worry about getting involved in government

The truth is, haters will go out of their way to get in our way.

(although many do). The church does need to be involved in the separation of church and hate. As with the church-and-state issue, there are at least two sides to the problem.

Hated

There is a saying today that goes, “Haters gonna hate.” If someone is intent on hating, we cannot control that. What we can control, however, is our reaction to hate. There will always be those who hate the church, and members of the church just for being members. It may be that they have had a bad experience with a church member or a congregation. It may be that they are intimidated by the message of salvation, and their refusal to obey it. Regardless of the reasons, there will always be those who persecute the church. Jesus and the apostles acknowledged opposition would happen. Their solution was the separation of church and hate.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (Matt 5: 38-42)

When faced with a hateful person, do not respond in kind. Keep the church, or at least your little part of it, separate from their hate. Chances are they would love a hateful response. That would give them another foothold with which to criticize the church.

There are ways to respond that defend the church without stooping to their level of hatred. In fact, in the very next verses Jesus gives the proper response.

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:43-45)

Simply telling a person that you are praying for them may not defuse the situation. It may even make them angrier and more hateful, but it shows you are consistent in your faith.

The easiest way to ensure the separation of church and hate would be to avoid the haters altogether. This, though, may be neither practical nor wise. As much as we would like to avoid those who hate us, the truth is that they will go out of their way to get in our way. If they were merely indifferent they would let us go our way with little interference. If recent events in Egypt have proven anything, it may be that even those who benefit from Christians may be among the first to turn on them.

Nor will a total separation from the haters accomplish God’s purpose. Shortly after Matthew records the blessedness of enduring persecution, he quotes Jesus as saying, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16) This is not said just about those who might be favorably disposed toward God’s people. How is one to turn a hater into a brother without shining God’s light? He may not respond, but that would only be an excuse for not acting favorably to those who would oppose. Only God knows whether a kind word or an act of faith might change even the hardest heart. After all, Saul the Persecutor became Paul the Apostle.

Hating

Today some of the greatest haters seem to be those who claim faith in God. This is not new. One of the arguments from the Jewish people against Christianity is the historical magnitude of the hateful behavior of Christians against the Jews. More wars have been fought in the name of religion, and particularly the Christian religion, than for any other cause. (The fact is that the wars were not about religion, but religion gains more support from the masses than obvious and unashamed greed.)

It is imperative that the church separate themselves from the doctrines of hatred. Those that hate us will be quick to point to the evidences of hate: bombing of abortion clinics, protesting at funerals, and beating people because of their sexual preference. Every time a Christian resorts to hateful actions, the cause of Christ is damaged, the name of God is profaned.

Paul admits in Romans 5:12 that all have sinned. We all have, he says, a propensity toward sin. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that although all have sinned, not everybody is bound to remain a sinner. Through the grace of God we may be free from sin, no longer a sinner. We do tend to think of one who has committed murder as being a murderer. We buy into the modern concept of “being” gay, as opposed to the biblical characterization of who commits a homosexual act. And yet most of us would not characterize one who exceeded the speed limit one time as being a speeder; we reserve that designation for one who habitually speeds.

If we can change our language and our attitude, then it might be that we can love the person who has sinned, and yet hate the sin itself. If we can do that, then maybe we will learn to have the same attitude about all sin. As it now stands, many Christians express hatred against certain sins, and tolerance toward others. They get all up in arms against “the gay community,” but take a live-and-let-live attitude toward petty theft from the workplace. Some people are going to continue to sin, whatever their sin. We must acknowledge that. This doesn’t mean we should stop preaching against sin; we must continue to oppose it wherever we find it. Rather it means that we should be consistent in preaching against all sin, or, preferably, in favor of telling the good news of the Christ.

When Paul commanded the Thessalonians (2 Thes 3:6) to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,” he probably meant this on a congregational level. (How can you withdraw from somebody you were never with in the first place?) Still, the overarching principle is valid. If one chooses to be hateful toward those without the church, we who are spiritual should distance ourselves from them. It is gratifying to see the news stories that cover the loving anti-protests that keep people from a certain church away

from funerals where they would protest. It is good that some are showing the world that the hateful behavior of a few is not representative of what we believe. It might even be proper for prominent Christians, every time the news carries a story about haters within the church, to make a statement in opposition to such behavior.

Love and Hate

Hate is not necessarily the opposite of love. Nor is it always the absence of love. It is possible to hate because of love. This is what is truly meant by the phrase “hate the sin, love the sinner.” When we love the sinner, we cannot help but hate the sin. If we truly love the sinner, it is our abhorrence of sin that causes us to try to turn him from his way; that is why we teach about God’s forgiveness.

The problem is, very few people seem to successfully separate the two. We tend to think of people as sinners, not as people who sin. That might be a fine distinction, but perhaps an important one. We are judging

Every time a Christian resorts to hateful actions, the cause of Christ is damaged, the name of God is profaned.

the person to be someone who is characterized by sin, and therefore one who cannot change. If, on the other hand, we see people as people who have sinned we are identifying a single action, not a character trait.

This is a biblical idea. God, John tells us, is love. (1 Jn 4:8) Love is an essential characteristic of God. And yet God hates. “Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.” (Deut 16:22) He even rewards those who hate in this way. “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Ps 45:7; Heb 1:9)

When the scriptures state that God or the righteous hated, the object of the hatred is almost never a person. Usually that which is hated is unrighteousness. Because God loves, God hates. Because God hates, he performed a loving action in sacrificing his only begotten son to remove sin and unrighteousness.

We are not always so discerning. Instead of hiding our hatred of sin behind loving actions toward the sinner, we often manifest the hatred. If we truly believe in the separation of church and hate, then we will channel our hatred of sin into actions of love toward the one who is sinning. Only in that way will we be like God. Only in that way will we show God to a lost world.

WHAT IS IT?

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. (Ex 16:15-18)

Moses here recounts the story of manna, the mysterious food from heaven while the children of Israel were in the wilderness. Rabbi Paul quotes this last verse in 2 Corinthians 8:15. There he makes a *drash* (a derived meaning) of what Moses says, applying it to *tzedaka* (charity) in the assembly of the believers in Yeshua.

Manna was a miraculous food. It appeared every morning, except the sabbath. It apparently changed flavor depending on the attitude of the eater. (A fine argument for always being in a chocolate attitude.) It spoiled overnight, except on Friday. It disappeared entirely as soon as the Israelites ate of the food of the promised land. (Josh 5:12) And, as we see in this passage, it was an equal opportunity food.

When the people complained for lack of food, God could have chosen to provide in any number of ways. Why did he choose manna? Perhaps it was because it was an unknown. (The word manna means "What is it?") Perhaps it was the unusual nature of the food.

God gave manna in response to a complaint. The Israelites were in a desert place. They had no food, and they even imagined a probably faulty history.

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (Ex 16:3)

In response, God gives them food. But it is most truly "daily bread." In America some people go to the store and buy two weeks' worth of groceries. God doesn't allow this for his people in the wilderness. He gives them food for one or two days. He even tells them not to gather for more than the allotted number of days.

In addition, the greedy person who gathers as much as he can comes back to the Tabernacle and measures his harvest. No matter how much he gathered, he has an omer full. The person who gathered just a little also has an omer full. The person who gathered much probably thinks that is not fair. But God says it is everything he needs, just as the one who gathered little gets just what he needs.

Rabbi Saul of Tarsus argues many years later that this applies to charity as well. If one gives, he will receive. God will make sure he has just enough. He who has much to give will still have enough. He who has little, and yet gives, will also have enough.

When the people first saw manna, they said, "What is it?" The name stuck, because they did not yet have the answer. But God knew the answer. It was "trust."

Timothy J. O'Hearn
737 Monell Dr NE
Albuquerque NM 87123