

## Prayer

Loving Lord Jesus Christ, by Your Cross and Resurrection You have overcome the problems of the world. Minister to all whose lives remain scarred by illness, injury, bitterness, despair, pain, and every kind of personal anguish. Make it clear to us where we can be of help or where we should stand aside, so that Your perfect will may be done for those who need Your help: AMEN

### **Other Prayer Suggestions**

- *Ask the Lord for His support and direction in your daily life*
- *Ask the Lord to guide you in your personal relationships*
- *Ask the Lord to help you with all new ventures you start*
- *Ask the Lord for assistance with the daily work you do*
- *Ask the Lord for encouragement in any difficult issues you face*
- *Ask the Lord for His blessing on all that lies ahead of you*

## Meditation

Let us start believing;  
Not because we must,  
but because Jesus Christ has saved us!

Let us start praying;  
Not just when we need to,  
but when the Lord prompts us!

Let us start listening;  
Not because we ought to,  
but because the Saviour loves us!

Let us start rejoicing;  
Not just when we want to,  
but when the Holy Spirit leads us!

Let us start living;  
Not because we have no option,  
but because our God has set us free!

Let us start expecting;  
Not just when we have a reason,  
but for all of the time God gives us!

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## Bible Study - Genesis 1:26-28

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

## Reflections

I have always loved knowing things about the world, and trying to understand why it is as we experience it. God has made it awesomely, and He has given us permission to explore it and delve into its mysteries. This is an immense privilege, and the quest for truth about the world and the people who live in it has dominated

my life. In my youth I loved physics, and I recall that as a youngster, I was fascinated by electric motors, and could not wait to find out how they worked! When I studied physics at university, I was being fascinated by all manner of subjects from theories about the origins of the universe to the workings of the human brain! Yet my life then took a different course, and being called to ministry in the church meant that I had to learn theology, together with the history of Christian missions and the study of Biblical Greek and Hebrew. All of this has been fascinating and I thank God for the opportunity to get to know these very different areas of human knowledge, especially Scripture..

What challenges me most, however, is the fact that under God, everything we see in this world is interconnected. Also, without the moral laws God has placed within His world and a common understanding of our humanity (see Genesis 1:26-28), our world is clearly a very fragmented place. The reality of the world today makes it appear that humanity is irreparably divided along social, religious and politics lines, and the countries of our world all compete with each other to use science and technology for their own ends! If history were to come to a stop with no more changes to how people live together in our world, then we seem to have settled in rather a sorry state. As Christians, we look forward to the day when Christ comes again to establish His rule, but the Bible does not teach that we should just sit back and accept the broken nature of our world. Our message of God's love and redemption is based on the truth of God's creation of our world and all the people within it; we are all connected because He made us, and he wants to re-establish a relationship with us that overcomes our broken and fallen nature.

Unfortunately, our world today is perhaps most broken over the matter of people's beliefs and culture, and when secular society promotes the idea that people can believe whatever they want as long as they don't hurt others, it makes a terrible mistake. The religious beliefs of the world, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian (and many more), are not charitably compatible. The most moderate of those who hold these beliefs have vastly differing attitudes towards women, money, children, old age, the nature of the family and politics, to name but a few important moral matters. Many of these are harmless enough, but some, such as the rights of women and the family, are explosively contentious. To put it bluntly, either men and women are equal partners in society without distinction or they are not. Further, what sort of morality does a multicultural society stand for if it accepts that women living within one or other faith community may be held less than equal to others? Using another example, some religions and some ideologies accept that it is right to kill other people in order to pursue a particular view of the world. Not all Muslims accept this, but enough do to hold the world's political systems to ransom; and neither are we rid of the fanaticism of dictators and fascist states, which use appalling brutality to enforce their rule throughout the world. Once violence is used, surely the ideology behind it, whether religious or political, must be challenged in the name of our common humanity under God.

If the serious issues that threaten to engulf our world are to be properly addressed today, then Christians need to engage with the battle to affirm common human rights based on the morality created by God within His world. In other words, we say that there are absolutes called 'right' and 'wrong', and also 'true' and 'false', in a world that has become very muddled over such things. Neither must we fight shy of the idea of 'human rights' because of the corrupt agendas of those who have abused the term in recent times. There is a common morality for all people, and the Bible tells us that God has implanted this within our world (see Romans 1:18-20); and if we do not believe this, then we ignore one of the vital the messages of Genesis 1. I sometimes think that the dire arguments between Christians over the interpretation of Genesis 1 (evolutionism or creationism) has been used by Satan to stop us applying its many other truths, and one of these is that God has made ALL humanity with a common identity (likeness), and a common spirit and a common morality. If we will not argue for this, then those who argue that there are different ways of understanding people will either live in ghettos or tear each other apart; and this appears to be the world in which we live today.

Surely, Christians must not refrain from the serious intellectual, political and cross cultural debates that determine how we deal with the precarious state of our world today; it is our witness to engage with this at every level. We have nothing to hide, we believe what we have to offer is the truth, and we do not need to be defensive about our faith; we need to be clear about it! Unless we begin to do this, then we hand the governance of the world over to extremists; for example, Muslim extremists who want to blow people up to establish world rule, or secular and political extremists who elevate themselves to the position of gods, or the corporate extremists who seek to control the world and its people through technology. Surely none of this is acceptable to anyone, and it is an affront to humanity and to the God who made us.

If we are to engage seriously with our world again, the right place for us to start is to make sure we know our God and His purposes for the world. We will find this in the Bible, and if we read the history of God's people, the church, we will discover more about how our forefathers have engaged in these battles in past generations, for we sometimes forget that they have. We also need to live the faith as we have been taught, and to expect the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. If we are indeed God's servants, then He needs no one else except us to change the world for the better. One day He will come again, but until then, our job

is to promote the Kingdom vigorously, for the sake of the world and the many people in it who are oppressed by devilish religious and political systems. Many are crying out for salvation but do not know where to find it.

God bless you

Paul H Ashby