

I Pledge Allegiance
#516, Week of 6-30-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

July 4 is a time to wave the flag. We gladly say, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." We pledge. We give our solemn promise. We pledge allegiance. We promise loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion.

We pledge allegiance to the flag, the symbol of our country, the United States. The states are united in one nation. Many peoples from various ethnic and national backgrounds unite under this one banner to form one nation.

This is a nation under God. Our motto is simple. "In God we trust." When we do acknowledge God and understand the many and diverse peoples of this land all bear God's image, the nation truly becomes indivisible. We work tirelessly for the liberty of all and for justice to prevail for all.

There is an implicit biblical perspective in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daniel exclaimed of God, "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings" (Daniel 2:21). Paul declares of the Almighty, "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). We need to remember these things.

Too Testy?
#517, Week of 7-7-2019

Dr. Dennis Prutow

The people of Israel had no drinking water. They grumbled. They harangued. They challenged Moses. "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Exodus 17:3). God told Moses, "Take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink" (Exodus 17:5-6).

The place was named Massah meaning "test." Forty years later, Moses warned the people, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

Satan tried to snare Jesus. "The devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, "He will command His angels concerning You"; and "On their

hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone”””
(Matthew 4:5-6).

Jesus hearkened back to Israel’s failure. “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Matthew 4:7). Like ancient Israel, we test God. Jesus doesn’t. His loving obedience makes up for our testy behavior.

A Debt of Gratitude
#518, Week of 7-14-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

A religious lawyer asked Jesus to name the first and greatest commandment. Jesus did not hesitate. He quoted the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37).

Here is a word under this heading of love. “You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name” (Deuteronomy 6:13). These words are similar to the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 5:7). We express love for God with worship, reverence, and respect.

Satan tried to get Jesus to repudiate His love for the Father. “The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me’” (Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus would have none of this devilry. “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only’” (Matthew 4:10).

Jesus worshipped the Father. His obedience was not a burden but a way to show His love. We fail in love. We are imperfect. The loving obedience of Jesus Christ pays the debt of gratitude we owe.

Love Requires Renewal
#519, Week of 7-21-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

After forty years of wondering and grumbling the people just didn’t get it. After all the miracles in Egypt, the manna, and the quail from heaven, the people did not understand the grace of God. Moses gave the reason. “To this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear” (Deuteronomy 29:4).

Moses also gave this promise. “The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul, so that you may live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). This promise is in keeping with the Great Commandment. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

The New Testament picture is the same. Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The apostle John declares, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). The apostle Paul says of fellow Christians, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). Hearts inclined toward the love of God require spiritual awakening and rebirth. This is why Jesus declares, “You must be born again” (John 3:7).

He loved Me
#520, Week of 7-28-2019

by Dennis Prutow

Here is my favorite Bible verse. “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

There is mystical union with Christ. Paul sees himself killed with Christ on the cross. His old hateful and degenerate self is dead. At the same time he lives. He lives because Christ lives within him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s new life comes to him by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul fought long and hard against Jesus. He finally came to his senses. He recognized Jesus as the Son of God. This Jesus was and is a divine person equal with God.

Because he was flooded with new life from above, Paul saw the love of God in giving His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Paul also concluded that Christ died on that cross to pay his debt of sin. It became intensely personal. Paul concluded of this Jesus whom He fought for so long, He “loved me and gave Himself for me.”

We all need to come to the place of looking to Jesus and saying, He “loved me and gave Himself up for me.”