



Peanut Butter



Prayer Wheels

And other Falsehoods

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Restoration Movement Literature

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Anyone who knows me well at all knows one thing for sure – I despise, loathe, even (yes) hate – peanut butter. To me, it is farthest thing from edible that I can imagine. It’s smell, taste, appearance, sound (yes, peanut butter makes sound – “Ewwwwwww”), and touch are all nauseating.

In my church sermons and lessons, I like to interject this opinion of mine, usually as a joke, but sometimes to make a point. The latter is mostly what I wish to accomplish in this booklet. There are some things that are despised by preference (such as my loathness towards peanut butter), and other things that are despised by God. Peanut butter falls into the first, and things like prayer wheels and other pagan innovations fall into the latter.

The “prayer wheel” concept was introduced into Christianity sometime in the early 20th century. It made its ways first into Baptist circles, then Charismatic circles, and then spread from there.

Many Christian-esque versions of prayer wheels that can be seen in many churches today do not look much like their Tibetan counterparts (on the cover, and where the idea of a prayer wheel was invented centuries ago), so many Christians today scoff and say there is nothing wrong with their version of a prayer wheel since it bears little resemblance to the original.

However, appearances have never mattered much to God (1 Samuel 16:7). It is what the prayer wheel stands for – or any other physical thing used in worship – that matters.

What is a prayer wheel?

Prayer wheels originated in Tibet around the 10th century AD. The original design (again, as seen on cover), was almost like a hand-held spinning drum, that a person would turn while they prayed, supposedly “aligning their intent with the mantras prayed.” It was a form of mystic meditation, designed to connect you more closely to whatever god you prayed to for the purpose of influencing your prayer to be answered.

The concept of a prayer wheel, when westernized, became a charismatic symbol for praying for anything from miraculous healing to receiving Holy Spirit baptism to receiving special gifts from God. Many believed that if they had “enough faith”, and prayed the prayers on their prayer wheel, and followed a long, drawn-out ritual of various sorts, they could bring about their prayer requests.

Obviously, there is nothing wrong with praying for what you need from God. The very word prayer means “ask”; a prayer is indeed hardly a prayer without a request! Nonetheless, outside of some very basic instructions, there is absolutely no value in external “tools” for prayer, and may actually teach some bad doctrine as well as unintentionally create a psychological or emotional dependence if Satan or just circumstances influence a person that the prayer wheel actually had something to do with their prayer being answered:

1) We are told to pray to God the Father (Matthew 6:9ff; Luke 11:1ff; John 16:26+27)

2) We are to pray in Jesus’ name (or, by His authority) – 1 Corinthians 1:1+2.

3) We are to offer thanksgiving in our prayers (Colossians 4:2)

4) We are to present our requests before God (Hebrews 4:14-16) with His will in mind (1 John 5:14).

Past this, there are no other “tools” Scripture gives us for prayer. Prayer always involve the proper address (God the Father, or Heavenly Father, or Father in Heaven), the proper authority (in Jesus’ name), the proper attitude (gratitude), and requests given in subjection to the will of God (1 John 5:14).

Thus, the harm of the prayer wheel concept comes into play by asking the following question: what is being accomplished by it? Where did the idea originate? Is it a potential stumbling block for others?

When dealing with a “new” idea like a prayer wheel, let us imagine an easy scenario: someone prays for something – like the healing of a sick friend – via their prayer wheel. The sick person gets better. The person who prayed will naturally believe the prayer wheel was the cause – or at least assisted – in their friend’s recovery. Anathema! Does the praise go to man, or to an object, or God alone? (Revelation 19:10, 22:9)

The idea of a prayer wheel, as discussed above, originates with pagan Tibet (Buddhism in particular). Is there warning against bringing idols and/or other foreign pagan ideas into the church, even if done innocently? All of the Apostles warned against eating meat sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 10:28). Was there anything wrong with this meat? Not at all, it was completely edible. Rather, it was a stumbling block to those who had just come out of idol worship to true faith in Jesus Christ.

“A stumbling block” is a very much misunderstood concept in Scripture:

Romans 14:1ff discusses how a Christian who enjoys great freedom in Christ may not initially recognize an everyday event (like a holiday, or food eaten, or something drunk) could negatively affect someone, even destroy them! (Romans 14:15)

Pagan-originated ideas like prayer wheels are such a thing. They can cause “delicate” (that is really what the word “weak” means in the Greek) Christians to stumble, at the very least. At the very worst, they can destroy a brother!

Any kind of reliance on an object to pray is also against the spirit of the cross:

When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain in the temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51). This curtain led into the Most Holy Place of the Temple, where the once-a-year Day of Atonement sacrifice was offered only by the High Priest. With Jesus’ sacrifice made once for all (Hebrews 9:28, 10:10), there was **no barrier** between God and man. Man could pray! Man could approach God’s throne with confidence! (Hebrews 4:14-16) What possible use is a prayer wheel – or anything else – when Jesus has given us clear and confident access to the throne of God?

A prayer wheel is also against the spirit of Christ as our High Priest and Advocate (Hebrews 4:15). He intercedes for us (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25), praying for us, advocating for us (1 John 2:1). What more could a prayer wheel do on top of what Christ has done and is doing for us now?

Finally, a prayer wheel really hearkens back to Gnosticism, an early cult formed originally from Christians (some 2nd century church leaders claimed that Simon the Sorcerer from Acts 8 started this cult) who fell and started mixing paganism with pure Christianity. In the books of

Colossians, Philippians, and 1 and 2 John, Paul and the Apostle John both have to contend with Gnostics who were trying to mix paganism with correct doctrine.

Gnostics believe that in order to have your prayers answered, or to have any kind of spiritual success (including salvation) at all, one must come to possess secret knowledge, speaking secret words, in secret rituals, to attain higher spiritual levels and access, in order to have more power in your prayers.

Prayer wheels mimic a similar function – believing that a ritualistic, patterned prayer procedure could whatsoever result in an enhanced prayer life instead of just obeying the simple examples and commands of Scripture.

Prayer wheels also inherently require the individual who wants to “complete the circle” to pray for a certain period of time. Jesus warns against this explicitly when He says we will not be heard for “our many words” (Matthew 6:7). Imagine, the Pharisees were Jews – praying to the right God – but with a wrong attitude and with a non-sanctioned style (many words, praying in public for the praise of men, etc.). No, Jesus tells how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). There is no possible way to improve upon the commands or the example of the Master!

In summary, prayer wheels are problematic for the following reasons:

- 1) They have a suspect pagan origin (Tibetan prayer wheels from the 10th century AD on)

2) They have a suspect “Christian” origin (used in early-charismatic circles along with long, drawn-out prayers and trying to have enough “faith” to cause prayers to be answered)

3) Jesus teaches us how to pray and what to pray and to whom to pray and in His name; there is absolutely no value (and possibly much danger) in adding, subtracting, or modifying those terms.

4) It could give people a false sense of utility (a stumbling block) if they “used” a prayer wheel and then coincidentally had their prayer answered, giving praise to the wheel (or their own ritual, or even their own faith) over giving all the praise to God.

5) It is against the spirit of the cross of Christ, who gave us all the access to the Father we possibly need.

6) It is against the spirit of Christ as our High Priest, who already is our advocate and intercedes for us.

7) It has eerie similarities to Gnosticism, where secret words, rituals, or knowledge gave a person a personal spiritual edge with God or angels.

8) It requires a person to have a certain minimum prayer length to get through the wheel, which against Jesus’ command that we will not heard because of our many words.

A song sung often that includes the idea of a prayer wheel comes from some of the early Charismatic-Independent Baptist movements:

“Just a Little Talk with Jesus” (only printed in part)

I once was lost in sin

But Jesus took me in

And then a little light from heaven

Filled my soul

Feel a little prayer wheel a-turning

You know, a little fire is a-burning

Let's have a little talk with my Jesus

Gonna make it right

Besides the obvious faith-only Baptist issue (another topic for another day), actually twice (only printed once here) mentioned here in this song is the idea of a prayer wheel turning.

As well, a little fire with the prayer wheel is a direct reference to the origin of a “fiery prayer wheel”, which was meant to “purify the negative karmas of the living beings it touches”. Indeed, some people feel “more clean” after they pray, but it was not the prayer that gave them true cleanliness – only the blood of Christ does that! (Isaiah 1:18)

What other seemingly-innocent falsehoods have crept into the church?

Probably the most popular of seemingly-innocent (but not) falsehoods is the “prosperity” or “health and wealth” false gospel.

When a wealthy mega-church is enjoying bounding success, with tons of money, and a well-paid “pastor”, and a production-show for a service every week, it is easy to see how people could be deceived that “the blessings of God” are with them.

Nonetheless, Scripture teaches absolutely no connection to earthly success with salvation. In fact, there are warnings of the opposite:

Matthew 19:24 – “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go into the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Also see Mark 10:25, 1 Timothy 6:9-12, and Revelation 1:3.

The Church at Smyrna that Jesus Himself addresses in Revelation 2:8-11 is possibly the most poignant piece of evidence against the idea of a prosperity Gospel:

- 1) Jesus points out that they are poor (Revelation 2:8)
- 2) Jesus points out they are afflicted, or unhealthy (Revelation 2:8)
- 3) Jesus points out that they are about to suffer (Revelation 2:10)
- 4) Jesus points out that they are about to be cast into prison (Revelation 2:10)

And yet, Jesus commends their faith, does not rescue them, or make them healthy or wealthy! Otherwise, here are some faithful, obedient, rich-in-Spirit folks who Jesus is giving one command to: endure! If they endure, they would inherit the crown of victory (salvation). The promise to come and the blessings to be had are not to be found on earth! (Matthew 6:19-21)

Very similar to the “health and wealth” Gospel is the “Word of Faith” movement that claims that if you believe enough – if you have the “Words of Faith” (and especially if you pay a certain TV preacher(s) lots of money) – then you can have the supernatural power to heal, get rich, or be famous.

This is also called “Name it and Claim it”.

This preacher sometimes hears other preachers quote Psalms 105:37 (also, Isaiah 33:24), sometimes rendered, “There were no feeble folk among them.”

This will be quoted to “prove” that faithful believers do not get sick, and if you are sick – then, well – you are unfaithful, or don’t have enough “faith”.

The problem with the context of this verse is that Israel had indeed been unfaithful (simply reading the majority of your Old Testament reveals this truth – especially Judges, most of 1 and 2 Kings, and the Chronicles). As well, Isaiah is writing at the time right before the Northern Kingdom would fall permanently into the hands of the Assyrians. Why would they fall into the hands of the Assyrians? Because they were unfaithful! Their kings were wicked (every single king of the Northern tribes was bad since it began), the people worshipped false gods at a false place at a false calendar (a fascinating study on denominationalism can be had from a study of the unfaithful Northern Kingdom), so God permanently destroyed the ten northern tribes in 722BC.

What does this have to do with Isaiah 33:24 or Psalm 105:37? Any “non-feeble” folk was because the feeble ones had died – either as a result of their sin (God struck them down) – or because the enemies of Israel slaughtered them. This was not supernatural healing; this was supernatural judgment, the survival of the fittest!

Even the relatively-faithful South (only by comparison) who had a few good kings and some faithful periods survived another century – 606BC – until God called the Babylonians into take them into captivity. After their captivity, the Israelites would never fall into idolatry again (good), but they would certainly reject and execute their very own Messiah! (Very bad!) “No feeble folk” does not help a spiritually-dead nation in any way!

Jesus Himself rejected the Jews as faithful although they had “faith” in the one true God because they had rejected His Son. He predicted in His parable of the Vineyard that the vineyard (as God’s chosen people) would be taken away from them and given to the church (Matthew 21:33-46). Their “faith”, and their lack of idolatry, did not mean a thing because they were not faithful to the Son the Father had sent!

In conclusion, my extreme dislike of peanut butter is a preference, and one I enjoy poking an occasional joke. On the other hand, “innovations” like prayer wheels have many potential negatives, no positives, and could be a stumbling block to many “delicate” (weak) Christians, possibly leading to their destruction! (Romans 15:14)

As well, the falsehood of the prosperity Gospel (or “Name It, Claim It”) can give people an equally-false sense of security about their health and wealth, like a prayer wheel might with their relationship with God. Only the blood of Christ saves; only the blood of Christ gives us access to the Father. All the same, only the blood of Christ gives salvation. To Him be all the glory!