

Prayer



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*“Truly, truly, I say to you,
whatsoever you ask
the Father in my name,
He will give it to you.”*
John 16:23

This is the promise of Christ to all who believe, and we know that our Lord’s promises were in perfect accord with the will of the Father.

Perhaps the greatest danger confronting us today is the lack of sufficient time spent in prayer. We are rushing to and fro, trying to organize something or attempting to meet deadlines, and there seems to be no time left to step aside and commune with God. Most of us seek God in much service; but at the same time, I am afraid that too many of us are neglecting our greatest source of strength: communion with God. When one realizes the value of prayer, he will let many so-called important things go undone just to have more time to talk with God.

Those who accomplish righteousness in the earth are those who take time to pray. They do not have time, but they take it anyway. Yes, they take time from important things, but things less important than prayer. Jesus was always being sought out by the yearning masses; yet, he always made time to withdraw from the suffering multitudes to commune with his Father. At times, he prayed before healing the people. Other times, he prayed afterward. He was consistent, however, with what he taught: *“Men ought always to pray,*

and not to faint.” And in following Jesus’ example, who *“offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death”*, we come to understand that one does not become strong in the Lord by praying but a few minutes a day. It takes hours, even days, of submission in prayer before one reaches the height of the prayer life. Jesus often found it necessary to continue *“all night in prayer”*.

When we pray, we recognize a divine law, for through prayer, God releases power to us that can meet the limits of human needs and experience. Hezekiah, you recall, was deathly ill, and, as with us, he wanted to live. Weeping, he prayed that more years would be added to his life, and God answered by giving him fifteen more years to live. May God help us to pray, not necessarily for more years to be added to our life but that more life would be added to our years. Jesus promised this life to his followers. *“I am come”*, he said, *“that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* This eternal life is attained chiefly through prayer. Knowing prayer’s potential benefits, and seeing the world plunging into ever-increasing darkness, the wise are praying more, and more earnestly, than ever. Practically every nation is sharpening its sword, and only God can save us. Oh, how people everywhere need to pray!

ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD

Prayer itself, however, is ineffectual if it comes from an insincere heart. It is the fervent prayer of a righteous man that *“availeth much”* (Jas. 5:16). Long ago, when the little nation of Judah was threatened with destruction, fearful King Zedekiah called for prayer, but he was more concerned with escaping trouble than with ridding himself of sin, the cause of his trouble. Prayers like this have no claim to the ears of God. The Psalmist wrote, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*

If prayer is to be effective, it must be according to the will of God. Consider these requirements, laid down by the Lord Himself, *“If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive*

their sin, and will heal their land.”

“IN THE NAME OF . . .”

Before the Son of God came, Israelites often approached the Father in the name of Old Testament worthies such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now, praise God, we may approach Him with the name that stands above all others - the name of Jesus, our Savior and His Son. Hallelujah! *“The name of Jesus is so sweet”*, exhorts one of our well-known hymns, and is it not fitting that we should come to the Father’s throne with Jesus’ name on our lips - not as a ceremonial form but as a reminder to ourselves of our debt to him whom the Father chose *“to be the propitiation for our sins”*?

Prayer should be the most delightful experience in the believer’s life. Something is surely out of order when it isn’t. To many, prayer is only a form, behind which they hide their real desires and intents. Such people forget God in the day of prosperity; however, when troubles arise, they want His help. They do not understand that asking for something is only part of the meaning of prayer. Real prayer is supplication, communication, and association with God. A child of God who loves his Father will not stop communing with Him just because he feels no urgent need. God is our Father, and He is always pleased to see His children at His footstool in prayer.

PRAYER FOR HELP

Of course, there is the prayer which comes of necessity; and such prayers are encouraged by the Lord, for He said, *“Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will glorify me”* (Ps. 50:15). Apparently, there is no prayer that touches God more than the one we offer in the time of our deepest sorrow and grief. Our heaviest heartaches seem to reach the Father more quickly.

Our Lord cried out to his Father in his agony on the cross, even though for our sakes he refused deliverance from the torment. Indeed, he showed us how we ought to persist in prayer for others by praying for the very ones who were torturing him. He was the perfect example of his preaching, for he had taught his followers, *“Love your enemies, bless*

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you.” It is true that love is powerful; still, love without prayer is not sufficient to carry us through. It takes both to gain the victory.

You recall the sadness of the disciples when James had been beheaded. Peter was in prison awaiting on the morrow the same fate. Humanly speaking, there was no way out; however, “*prayer was made unto God without ceasing*”, and God answered. And just as the prayers of those early saints opened the iron gate for Peter, so will fervent prayer today remove the iron curtain of sin and lead God’s people to the liberty of Christ. Let us then avail ourselves of this unfailing weapon and trust in the One who placed it in our hand.

“YOU SAID”

When Jacob’s brother Esau (who apparently had never forgiven him for stealing his birthright) was on his way with four hundred men to meet Jacob, what was poor Jacob to do? He resorted to the weapon of prayer. “*Deliver me, I beseech you, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And you said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea*” (Gen. 32:11-12). Notice, please, how Jacob reminded God of His promise to him twenty years earlier. Was God pleased with this? “*And you said*” had a powerful effect in the ears of God, for “*Esau ran to meet [Jacob], and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And they wept.*”

The angel said to Jacob, “*As a prince, you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed.*” Yes, prayer won Esau, for he was conquered while Jacob was alone with God, upon his knees. Prayer closed the lions’ mouths for Daniel. When wicked Haman sought to destroy the Jews, Queen Esther fasted and prayed three days, and God heard her and delivered His people. Moses prayed in earnest when his brother Aaron built a golden calf at Mount Sinai. How God’s anger was kindled against the children of Israel for worshiping it! “*Now therefore let me alone,*” God said to Moses, “*that my wrath may wax hot against them,*

and that I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation” (Ex. 32:10). Moses did not want Israel destroyed, even though by this would his own name be honored. Moses, like Jacob, reminded God of His promise: “*Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants,*” pleaded Moses, “*to whom you swore by your own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever*” (Ex. 32:13). What were the results of this prayer? “*And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.*” Evidently, God delights to hear His people plead His promises. Yes, to remind the Lord of His promises, as Jacob, Moses, and other great souls so often did, is acceptable with Him, provided we are contrite as they were.

God always answers sincere prayers to know Him and to serve Him more acceptably, even though the form His answers take may confuse those who are lacking in discernment. Listen to this girl’s prayer (author unknown):

She asked to be made like her Savior;
He took her right then at her word
And sent her a heart-crushing burden,
‘Til the depths of her soul were stirred.

She asked for a faith strong and simple;
He called for the dark clouds to come.
She staggered by faith through the darkness,
For obscured by the storm was the sun.

She prayed to be filled with a passion
Of love for lost souls and for God;
Again in response to her longings,
She sank ‘neath the chastening rod.

She wanted a place in His vineyard;
He took her away from her home
And placed her among hardened sinners,
Where - humanly - she stood alone.

She saw she must give up ambitions,
Her treasured “air castles” for years.
She knelt in complete consecration
And whispered “Amen” through her tears.

She wanted a meek, lowly spirit;

The work he gave answered that cry,
‘Til some who had once been companions
With pitying smiles passed her by.

She asked to lean hard on her Savior;
He took human props quite away.
No friend here on earth could give comfort,
And she could do nothing but pray.

I saw her go out in the vineyard
To harvest the ripening grain;
Her eyes were still moistened with weeping;
Her heart was still throbbing with pain.

But many a heart that was broken,
And many a wrecked, blighted life
Was made to thank God for her coming,
And bringing God’s peace to the strife.

She prayed to be made like her Savior,
And the burdens he gave her to bear
Had been but the great Shepherd’s answer,
The answer he promised to prayer.

Two artists were asked that each paint his own idea of peace. One painted a scene of calmness, showing a green pasture in which a small herd of sheep was grazing contentedly, and everything spoke of tranquility and peace. The other artist portrayed a raging waterfall as it violently rushed to the depths below. On a projecting ridge of rock under the waterfall and by the side of its leaping and foaming stream, he painted a little bird sitting undisturbed and unafraid on its nest. What a splendid concept of peace in the midst of strife, conflict, and the harassing confusion of this age! What a perfect picture of every believer who has taken his or her burdens to God in prayer and is resting in the confidence of faith.

At the throne of God many blessings are waiting for us, blessings of faith, peace, healing, and eternal life. Let us come to Him and be blessed.

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