

THE PRIVILEGE AND THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

"Let us...come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." – Hebrews 4:16.

PRAYER is a general term for all manner of petitions – whether a request, a hymn, or an expression of thanksgiving and praise. The word supplication seems to carry with it the thought of a continuous request, a repeated prayer, a longing desire, a waiting for the Lord to grant our petitions.

Well has the poet said,

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,

Uttered or unexpressed."

The first intimation of approach to God on the part of humanity is that in connection with the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel. They did not come, however, with a petition to a Father, but with sacrifices, thus acknowledging sin. The one who brought a sacrifice symbolically representing a sin-offering God accepted; the other, He declined to accept in any sense of the word.

Two thousand years later, God made choice of Abraham as the person through whom the vague promise made to Eve should be fulfilled; and to him He made the very definite promise that in him and his Seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. With Abraham God made a Covenant, which He renewed to Abraham's posterity – to Isaac, but not to Ishmael; to Jacob, but not to Esau. These men were privileged to pray, because by their faith they were justified to fellowship with God.

Eventually these blessings of Divine favor and grace extended to Israel as a nation; and they entered into these privileges in the full

sense of the word, under the Covenant of the Law, of which Moses was the mediator. From that time on they had the same opportunities to appeal to God as had Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Indeed, in some respects, they had a preferred condition. They had a typical Atonement Day, on which they were typically cleansed; and because of this typical cleansing, they were permitted to come to God, as did David, Hezekiah and others.

The temple at Jerusalem was called the House of God, and the people went up to the temple to pray. Apparently it was generally understood that they might not pray anywhere and everywhere. This is indicated by our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. Suppliants were heard only when they went to the temple to pray. The Samaritans claimed that the proper place to pray was on Gerizim, the mountain of Samaria. When the woman asked our Lord in regard to this matter, He intimated that the Jews were right in claiming that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. – John 4:20-24.

The Jewish nation, by means of their Law Covenant made with God, were in covenant relationship to Him, and were, therefore, permitted to pray to Him. God does not regard all prayers, but only those offered by persons in a particular attitude of mind, and in a certain covenant relationship. Those outside – even sincere, honest Gentiles – did not have the privilege which Israel possessed.

ACCESS TO THRONE OF GRACE A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE

During the Gospel Dispensation, all who have made full consecration to God have become spiritual sons of God and may ask of Him as their Father, may come boldly, confidently, to the Throne of Grace in prayer. Those who have not made a consecration to God have no Advocate through whom to approach Him. Those who come in the spirit of prayer and with a real desire for those blessings which God has promised to give, will see that prayer is a privilege restricted

to a certain class. Those who do not esteem it a privilege may as well not come; for God has not as yet made any proposition to the world. Prayer is the privilege of God's children.

Cornelius was a man who sought harmony with God. Although he prayed for years and gave much alms, yet his prayers and alms did not come up before God until an appropriate time – not until Jesus had died and ascended up on High, there to appear in the presence of God for us. (Acts 10:1,2,4; Heb. 9:24.) Three and a half years after the Cross, at the end of the time of special favor to the Jews, this man's prayers and alms came up before God as a memorial. But even then he must send men to Joppa to invite St. Peter to come to his home and instruct him how to receive the blessing of God in Christ. When Cornelius accepted Christ, our Lord became his Advocate, and the Holy Spirit came upon him. Thereafter he had the privilege of access to the Father at the Throne of Grace.

So is it with humanity today. There is but one way for any to avail himself of the privilege of prayer. Each must recognize the fact that he is a sinner, and that there is no access to God except through Christ. In an earthly court, etiquette demands that one who desires to be presented to the king must first receive an invitation to appear in the king's presence, then at a set time he must appear, dressed in a certain kind of clothes. It is the same at the Heavenly Court. No man can come to God except **[R5201 : page 84]** through Christ Jesus. After he has accepted our Lord as his Redeemer, and has offered himself in consecration, our Lord, as his Advocate, must cover his imperfections with the Robe of His own Righteousness, and present him to the Father. Then he will be accepted and given the privilege of prayer.

POSSESSORS OF PARTICULAR QUALITIES OF MIND NATURALLY DRAWN TO GOD

The question then arises, If the world cannot approach God in prayer, what is the method by which He draws men? The Scriptures

say that no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him. (John 6:44.) The answer is that the drawing cannot be done through the Holy Spirit; for the world has not yet received that Spirit. The drawing power which the Almighty exercises over humanity is in different degrees. Some have a strong desire to worship God, others have a weak desire, and others have no desire at all. This difference is due to the shape of the brain. Mankind are born with differences in this respect. – Psa. 51:5.

Various imperfections were stamped upon us before our birth. As the Scriptures say, "There is none righteous, no, not one"; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10,23.) All come short of that standard which God would be pleased to recognize. But amongst mankind there are some who have not lost their reverence, whatever else they may have lost in the unbalance of mind resulting from the fall. Or perhaps they have the quality of conscientiousness or appreciation of justice well developed. These qualities draw or incline their possessors toward God; and they feel as if they cannot be happy without Him. This is the drawing influence.

This drawing influence may be illustrated by the effect of a magnet. If a quantity of steel filings were scattered throughout a box of sawdust, and a magnet were held close to the surface, the steel filings would immediately respond to the attraction of the magnet. On the other hand, the sawdust would not be affected; nor would the steel filings respond to any other influence than that of a magnet, exercised either directly or indirectly.

Man was created in the image of God. The fall has greatly marred that image, but no one is totally depraved. All have unbalanced brains, some in one direction, others in another. When the Truth comes in contact with those whose organs of veneration or conscientiousness are less impaired, they are drawn to investigate it, with the hope of being drawn close to God. Those whose organs of veneration and

conscientiousness are more impaired, do not have this experience, and are not drawn unto God, if haply they may find Him.

Those who are without this drawing influence are not to be blamed; for they were born under those unfavorable conditions. Those who are reverential are, however, favored in that whoever would come to God must exercise faith in Christ; for without this faith there can be no blessing. At first this blessing and privilege are not clearly discerned by the seeker after righteousness. He merely longs to know God, and as he seeks, he finds; and as he knocks, it is opened unto him. – Matt. 7:7,8.

Any one, therefore, who seeks God will find Him; for the Scriptures promise, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." (James 4:8.) Those who thus find the way to God have something for which to be thankful in the possession of the quality of mind which led them to appreciate God. Persons of a particular character will follow on in the way and will, if faithful, attain to the reward. Those who have it not will not be drawn of the Lord until they shall have been made over in the next Age. We are not, therefore, to suppose that everybody is being drawn during the present Age.

After a person has been drawn, guided and instructed, then his *will* comes into action. It is for him to decide what course he will pursue. When he sees that no man comes to the Father except through Christ, and that the conditions are self-sacrifice, then he has the matter squarely before his mind. There are Scriptures which warn him that the path is difficult, but there are other Scriptures which tell him of the glory, honor and immortality at the end of the way. It is for the person to decide what he will do. But he does not come fully into the family of God until he has decided, and has taken the step of thorough consecration unto death; only then can he be begotten of the Holy Spirit and enter the School of Christ.

PRAYER A PRIVILEGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

During the Jewish Dispensation, the Jews had the privilege of approaching God in prayer; but during the Gospel Age they have not had this privilege. As long as the Atonement Day sacrifices were offered annually, they had the privilege of prayer under the Law Covenant; but as soon as the typical sin-offerings ceased, all those privileges which that Covenant secured for them terminated; therefore the Jews have no access to God. They are still under the Law Covenant; but they have lost this special feature of it, because the typical priesthood ceased to be recognized as soon as the Antitypical Priest appeared.

The Church of Christ alone, therefore, at this time has the special privilege of coming to God in prayer; for the great Antitypical High Priest has made a satisfactory Sin-Offering of Himself. Whosoever will, through faith in Him and under the covenant relationship of sacrifice, may draw near to God in prayer, nothing doubting.

But while only the consecrated class, the under priesthood, the New Creation, are thus encouraged to approach the Throne of Grace with confidence and courage, very evidently all who in any proper sense belong to the "household of faith" may to some extent enjoy the privileges of prayer, the privileges of thanksgiving and intercession, and may rejoice in the peace of God, in a realization of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the Atonement.

During the Millennial Age, every good trait which any one possesses will be an advantage to him, and every evil trait will be a disadvantage. But no advantage will be so great that it will enable any to rise without the aid of Messiah. The less degraded will not have so far to retrace their steps; but where much grace is needed, much will be supplied. The power of the great Mediator will be adapted to all conditions; for the Scriptures give us the assurance that Christ's Kingdom will be instituted for that very purpose. Since there is none

righteous, no, not one, therefore all must have the great Messiah to assist them back into full harmony with God.

PRAYER AN OPPORTUNITY AND A NECESSITY

While prayer is a privilege and not a command, yet our condition makes it a necessity. Because of the fall of man from his original perfection, our flesh has imperfections, frailties; and yet we, as New Creatures, have responsibility for these weaknesses. The only way to discharge these responsibilities is to go to the Throne of Grace and there obtain help in time of need. Whoever, therefore, goes frequently to the Throne of Grace in prayer thus indicates that he recognizes the necessity of using the opportunity which God has provided in his interest and as his privilege.

Prayer is necessary to the well-being of any one who would properly enjoy the blessings and privileges of his organism. We have the organ of veneration, which appeals **[R5201 : page 85]** to us for the worship of God. If we decline this worship, ignorantly or wilfully, our best interests could not be served. In this respect, the majority of the world are not serving their best interests; but the Christian is so doing.

The person who does the proper amount of watching will have no difficulty in determining when he ought to pray. If he watches properly, he will continually see something about which to pray. If he foresees trouble and says, "Tomorrow morning I will pray about the matter," he is making a mistake. As soon as one has any thought or idea of a coming difficulty, he should make it the subject of prayer. "To him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Whoever seeks the Divine pleasing will find it.

The Lord's people are to watch in every direction. Our time is consecrated to the Lord, and it is our duty to watch that we render it to Him. If we consecrate our time to Him, and then waste it in reading novels and other worldly literature or in playing games, we are not

using our time properly, although these practices are not sinful. Likewise we are to watch our own temptations, and to seek to control self and to guard against our own weaknesses, as well as those of others. We are also to watch the Word of the Lord, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.

Every trial, *every* temptation, is a *special* trial, a *special* temptation. No one knows whither the smallest temptation may lead. The Scriptures warn us to take heed; for what may seem a *small* matter may lead to something *great*. The fact that a thing may seem small does not imply that it may not be the most serious event of our whole life.

Those who have more opportunities for service are less liable to be led into temptation than are those who have fewer. We are, therefore, to be "not slothful in business"; but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11.) Watching against the world and its temptations, against our own flesh and its weaknesses, against the Adversary [R5202 : page 85] and his delusions – these duties will keep us busy enough.

We are also to watch the signs of the times. In our Lord's day He reproved some because they knew not the time of their visitation. His words were, "Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this *time*?" (Luke 12:56.) If we are too much engaged in work or in pleasure to have time to *study*, to *watch* properly, we find ourselves in difficulty.

WATCHING UNTO PRAYER COMMENDED

It is one thing to be *tempted*, and quite another thing to *enter into* temptation. Our Lord was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet *without sin*" – He did not in any manner *give way* to the Tempter. So it should be with us. We are to resist the Devil and to watch and pray that we yield not to temptation. If we are negligent, if we think, "Oh, a little indulgence this once will not hurt us!" we are in danger.

The only safe position for us to take is to watch and pray *continually*, for if we should *enter* temptation we know not where the matter may *end*. As some one has aptly said, "We cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we *can* prevent their nesting in our hair."

On the night in which our Lord was betrayed, St. Peter was amongst the most confident of the Apostles. He said to the Lord, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." (Matt. 26:33.) He did not know how much weakness was in him; therefore, when *the Lord* was *watching and praying* that momentous night, St. Peter was one of the first to *fall asleep!* Afterwards he was the very one to *deny* the Lord, and denied Him with *cursing!*

We recall our Lord's words to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31,32.) St. Peter's very courage led him into a trap placed before him by the Adversary. This quality he showed when he went into the courtyard of the palace and mingled with those who were there. St. John, who accompanied him, was a relative of one of the priests; but St. Peter, who was recognized by his speech as a Galilean, was courageous enough to enter, even after having cut off the ear of one of the priest's servants. – John 18:15,16.

Our Lord had foretold what would take place, saying, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me." (Luke 22:34.) After this had happened on the night of the trial, St. Peter remembered the words of Jesus, "and went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62.) Had he not done so, we know not what might have happened to him. The weeping showed that the denial was merely the result of weakness of the flesh.

St. Peter could have taken a wrong attitude. He could have said, "I had a right to stand up for my own life, and not to be implicated in

this matter." Thus he might have gotten into a wrong condition of heart; but his crushing out of this evil inclination toward self-preservation proved that in spite of his thrice repeated denial he was at heart loyal to his Master. So is it also with us; he who resists the smallest temptation thereby strengthens his character that he may be able to withstand the greater ones.

A good story is told which illustrates the wisdom of not entering into temptation. A man who desired to hire a coachman had a number of applicants for the position. They were ushered into his office, and he asked them, "How near could you drive to the edge of a precipice without danger of accident?" One said he could drive within a foot without fear of falling over; another thought he could safely come within six inches of the edge; and so on. Finally, one man who had listened in silence to the others, said, "I do not know how near to the edge of the precipice I could safely drive; but I do know that I would keep as far away from it as I possibly could." This man was given the position.

This is the principle upon which we should act. The one who keeps the farthest away from temptation is on the safe side. Those who feel too confident of their own strength and power and go too near the danger line are liable to slip over the edge. Let us ever pray that we may not enter into temptation; let us also *watch* that we may keep out of danger.

PRAYING FOR TEMPORAL THINGS

On His last evening with His Apostles, our Lord said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24.) Undoubtedly there is a special blessing to those who look for a fulfilment of His promise. Our Lord said, on one occasion, that the Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. (Luke 11:13.) He did not mean that we must necessarily use the words, "Give us the Holy

Spirit," or that we should pray for a Pentecostal blessing, as do some well-meaning friends; but that we should ask for the spirit of the Truth, of a sound mind, for the wisdom which comes from above.

We are not wise enough to guide our matters aright. We are instructed, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5.) This **[R5202 : page 86]** wisdom seems to be especially necessary to us as the servants of God, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. – Psa. 19:14.

Our Lord instructed His disciples, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek); for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." (Matt. 6:31,32.) His words seem to imply that we are to be different from the world. They would be ready to ask and pray for every imaginable blessing – different kinds of food, houses, money, and what not! They could not pray for spiritual things; for they have no appreciation of such gifts. Be not like them.

Why, then, did our Lord in His prayer say, "Give us this day our daily bread"? This is a very different matter from specialization in prayer. The Lord has promised that, if we are faithful, our bread and water shall be sure. (Isa. 33:16.) We shall not be neglected. It is very proper that we acknowledge the Lord as the Giver of all good. According to His promise, we look to Him to give us food and raiment. Whatever we have, we acknowledge our dependence upon the Lord for what He provides for us; and we ask for nothing beyond what He does provide.

The more we advance in spiritual development, the less we feel like dictating to the Lord and the greater confidence we have in His Wisdom and the more faith in His promises. The most that we should do is to make mention to Him of those promises for temporal

provision and of our trust in them. Of one thing we may be sure – that the Lord, who has called us to be His followers, has us under His supervision, and will see to it that all things shall work together for our good. If he calls us to be members of the Body of Christ, neither lack of food nor anything else can hinder us from the full opportunity of making our calling and election sure.

Those around whom the Angel of the Lord encampeth (Psa. 34:7), may be said to have a charmed life. The Lord is directing His Church. Therefore, think you that He will permit loss of life through accident or illness before we have had time to comply with the terms of His invitation? Surely not! Therefore, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.) We are trusting in the promises of God. He will accomplish His Divine purpose in us, if we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, and if we are faithful in obedience.

The Editor does not recall having from childhood asked the Lord for physical strength or health. He has known times when his physical strength was not great and when there were opportunities for service which seemed to require more strength than he had. Then he has taken pleasure in going before the Lord in prayer and saying that he was trusting that the necessary strength and all else which the Lord saw best to give him would be provided; but that if the Lord saw best that he should not be able to make a satisfactory presentation, he would still do his part and leave the rest with the Lord, knowing that whatever the Lord permitted would be the best experience for him.

This course has always been sufficient. In forty years of active service, he has never missed a meeting because of lack of strength, although there have been times when his friends have said, "You cannot possibly speak tonight!" His reply invariably has been, "If the Lord gives me strength, I will go to the meeting place, and will trust Him for strength to speak." At one time he almost fainted on the platform; but grace sufficient has always been his portion. So long as

he remains on this side of the veil, he intends to speak whenever he has an opportunity, unless he is unable to do so. He is sure that if the Lord gives him the opportunity to speak, He will also furnish the needed strength.

PROPER SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

When we recall that St. James said of some of his day, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3), we feel that we should be careful what we ask for. Our Lord instructed His Apostles that it is very important to abide in Him and to see that His words abide in us, if we would have our prayers answered. His words are, "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) In other words, petitions according to the Lord's **[R5203 : page 86]** will shall be answered, but those contrary to His will shall remain unanswered.

To ask selfishly for the things of the earth would not be true prayer. Many Christians have a mandatory way of telling the Lord what they would like to have Him do for them – that so many should be converted to Him at a meeting; that this meeting should be thus prospered; etc. Our prayers should be along higher lines than these. Temporalities should be presented in a casual way. We should have the desire to subsist in such a manner as would be pleasing to the Lord and should be thankful for whatever His providence may give us – whether much or little.

It has been suggested that to pray for anything which God is *willing to give* is entirely proper. We may pray for the Holy Spirit, for more love, more gentleness, more patience, more wisdom from on High. We may pray that all these things will work together for our good; for He has promised that this shall be. We may pray for guidance from the Lord as may be best in His sight. But we may not *tell Him what to do*; for we have no means of knowing what is His will in matters in general.

Our Lord did not pray in a mandatory fashion. With His petitions, He said, "Not *My* will, but *Thine*, be done" – I have no will of My own; for I have given up My will and I desire to have Thy will done. This is a prayer of full submission. It did not mean that our Lord did not pray in faith, nor that He would not get what He desired. It meant that He desired to learn the Father's will; and He learned that the Father willed that He should drink the cup of suffering to the very dregs.

If we are submissive, our prayers will become more and more messages of thanksgiving. We shall increasingly desire to walk in the Master's footsteps. We shall desire that His will be done in us rather than anything that we could attempt to tell Him. Everything will be according to His Plan, which will come to pass, and which He will not alter for us nor for anyone else in the world. Those who have reached this development of Christian living will realize that it is not necessary to pray that God will *save* this or that one; for has He not promised to save all the people of the earth who will come to Him in His appointed way?

Consider the case of Saul of Tarsus. He was seeking to do God's will, but was *blinded*. After God had opened his eyes to the real facts of the case, he went forward in the *right way*. He was a holiness man both before and after he received the Truth; but the enlightenment which he received taught him better how to do the will of God. If he had not been a chosen vessel of the Lord, he would have had no such experience, but rather he would have been treated as was Simon the Sorcerer. **[R5203 : page 87]**

ANSWER TO PRAYER DELAYED FOR OUR GOOD

Amongst some Christian people, agonizing in prayer, wrestling with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel, is very much encouraged. Frequently these people do so much praying that they do no studying, much to their disadvantage. The Scriptures instruct us to *study* to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), and not to seek to

get something in a miraculous way, but rather in an intelligent manner. People who pray after this fashion are proceeding somewhat as did the prophets of Baal in the time of Elijah. Those men ran along the altar, cutting themselves with stones and crying to their god to consume the sacrifice. – I Kings 18:26-29.

The Prophet Elijah, on the contrary, was very calm. He worshiped an intelligent God, who needed not to be shouted at to attract His attention. When the time came for Elijah to pray, he did so, using few words, but going straight to the point. – I Kings 18:36-38.

There is a lesson for Christians in this narrative. Some who misunderstand the Divine Character and Plan in general, pray for the things which they should not, and neglect to ask for the right things. If we abide in the Lord and His words abide in us, we shall know what to ask for; and we shall be so careful about our asking that we shall not ask amiss.

If one's prayers seem not to be answered, he should not become faint-hearted and cease to pray. Our Lord says that we should pray and not faint. (Luke 18:1-8.) Our Heavenly Father may will to bring us into such a condition of heart that we can appreciate His blessing. It may be God's will to *delay* the answer for our highest good.

Thirty-nine hundred years ago, God promised Abraham that he should have the land of Canaan, and that in his Seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. That promise is not yet fulfilled. (Acts 7:5.) For more than eighteen hundred years the Church has prayed, "Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." The Lord has not answered the prayer yet; nevertheless we are to continue to pray and to wait patiently. We have faith that God will do as He has promised. "Wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until the Day that I rise up." – Zeph. 3:8.

There is a great blessing in store for all those who delight their hearts in the way of the Lord. We are in line with His gracious promises. We are waiting and praying. By and by, the Lord says, He will avenge His own Elect – in the end of this Age. He will deliver them from all the opposition of the flesh and of the Adversary. He will set them on High and pour them out a blessing such as He has promised. Then the prayers will be answered. Meantime, the prayers continue to go up, earnestly, trustfully.

There is a difference between "saying one's prayers" and *praying*. In prayer, we should have some definite request before our minds, in order that we may look intelligently for an answer. A brother, who was carefully scrutinizing his thoughts, words and doings, with a view to discovering what trait of character most needed upbuilding, concluded that he needed *patience*. Sometime after, he wrote, "I have been wondering what is the matter. I have been praying for more patience; but my trials are of such a character that my patience is actually growing less. But lately I begin to see that the Lord is answering my prayer for patience in this very way, and is permitting these trials for the very purpose of developing this trait of character in me."

This experience is in line with the Apostle's injunction, "Take unto you the whole armor of God." (Eph. 6:13.) Whatever our prayer may be, we should watch to see in what manner the Lord is answering our petitions. This attitude on our part will demonstrate our faith, trust and loyalty. In turn our faith will be *strengthened*. Thus shall we be pleasing to the Lord because of our confidence in Him. He knows the way that we take better than do we ourselves. Then if something which we had not been anticipating should come into our lives, we should think, "Here is a lesson for us to learn – of patience, of obedience."

It is the privilege of the Lord's people to *ask*, in order that they may have fulness of joy. We have this joy and the "peace of God,

which passeth all understanding," and we rejoice greatly in hope of the glorious things which the Father has in store for us and which the Holy Spirit reveals through the Word. The joyful Christian is the thankful Christian. The thankful Christian is the one who is making the best use of his life. By reason of having exercised thankfulness of heart, he will be the better prepared for the Kingdom. Those less thankful may attain the Kingdom, for aught we know. But the thankless heart will not get the Kingdom.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF PRAYER

The text, "*Pray without ceasing,*" would seem to be the equivalent of the statement, "Cease not to pray" – the petition continues, as if the person were in an expectant attitude. In one way or another that petition may be still awaiting an answer. This idea is carried out in a court of law. It is the custom to address the court, saying that the applicants pray for such and such release from such and such difficulty in certain cases. That request might be withdrawn, or it might be continued. So it is with the prayers which we make to the Heavenly Court. We have made our petition; and if it is worth asking for, it is worth waiting for.

We should not be as the Gentiles, who thought that they would be heard for their much speaking. But we should seek first the Kingdom of God. Our prayers should be along that line. Whatever temporal experiences we would have the Heavenly Father might see to be helpful to us in the attainment of the Heavenly things of the Gospel. We should not cease our praying, although we are not bound by an iron law. God has not commanded us to pray, because that would be in the nature of a fixed rule, to disobey which would be sin. But we believe He will bless those who ask. The more we feel our need of things, the more we appreciate them when we get them. The Lord would have us appreciate these gifts by going frequently to request them; then, when they come to us, we are in a condition to receive and to make a better use of them.

We have many reasons for giving thanks – the heart that gives thanks will find itself more and more in a thankful attitude. At first when we begin to give thanks, we do so for the more pleasant things; but as our experience increases, we find joy in the afflictions and the persecutions of life; for these experiences refine our hearts and make them more susceptible to the right as against the wrong – the Truth as against the error, the purity as against the impurity.

Not only should we pray frequently and with regularity, but we should be always in the attitude of prayer. The children of God should be in that attitude of heart which looks to the Lord for Divine guidance in every perplexity and every experience. Just as the needle turns to the pole, so our hearts should turn to the Lord. If there is pain or trouble or difficulty in our pathway, we should look to Him. If there is privilege of serving the Lord, we should not think ourselves competent for the **[R5204 : page 88]** service without turning to the Lord for help. In other words, the Christian's prayer should ascend not only in the beginning of the day; the atmosphere of prayer should surround him continually. It should not be a mere sense of duty, but an appreciation of a great privilege.

Those who appreciate the Lord at all could not afford to be without this privilege. Those who do appreciate this privilege rejoice to go to the Heavenly Father many times a day. Our advice to all who are seeking to walk the narrow way, would be that they forget not this privilege. But in their families or in their rooms with their roommate, the prayer should be in such a form as would be reasonable and proper, according to what would be their best judgment of pleasing the Lord – and not to be an intrusion in any sense.

FAITH STRENGTHENED BY PRAYER

As to just how the prayers of one may benefit another we may not know. We have not sufficient information to philosophize on it very deeply. We might surmise certain mental influences proceeding from one to another, just as we know electrical influences to proceed

from one station to another thousands of miles away. The powers of the mind are something not comprehended. We can influence ourselves, and, to a certain extent, influence another. One mind can influence another without a word, by some telepathic power. As to why God permits this and gives blessings in answer to prayer we cannot say. We are left to philosophize, to speculate.

If we are in the School of Christ, we are there to be taught, to learn certain lessons of life. One of the lessons is to have full, perfect faith in God – absolute trust. Such a trust is exercised by our prayers for ourselves as well as for others; and this trust is cultivated by our prayers. God is pleased to bless these prayers, and thus to cultivate and strengthen our faith. We cannot suppose that God would leave any important work undone if we failed to pray for it, or that the answer to our prayer would come as we look for it; but blessings may come from one channel or another. God is quite able to overrule any matter so that He can give blessings, either by our co-operation and prayers, or without our co-operation and prayers.

We have reason to believe that when we pray for others our prayers avail. We have known instances where prayers have been answered very remarkably. The Lord's Word seems to inculcate this faith in us. God's people *have been* people of prayer, and *are* people of prayer. We cannot imagine how one could be a consistent follower of Christ without prayer.

FOR WHOM MAY WE NOW PRAY?

We understand that promiscuous praying for health during the Gospel Age would have been improper, and that only by means of the *gift* of healing were the early cures of the Age performed; that it ceased with the death of the Apostles after accomplishing its object; and that the proper prayers relating to sickness, on the part of the saints, would have been those offered for the forgiveness of sins – as a result of which healing followed. But we see, too, that as the Millennial Age is dawning – lapping upon the Gospel Age, which is

closing – we should expect that healing and general restitution would begin to be manifested, much as we do see it. And this leads us to inquire, In the light of the foregoing examination of the Bible teachings, and in the light of our present location in the dawn of the Millennium, for whom may we now pray?

We answer, the saints cannot properly pray for their own health now, any more than could their Master. They cannot properly ask the Restitution privileges which they have consecrated, nor can they ask that their sacrifices be nullified, by having all the cost of weariness, exhaustion, stripes or sickness miraculously removed. But when they realize their afflictions to be punishments for sins, they can still feel at liberty to confess their sins one to another, and to pray God for forgiveness. Thus they may as a result be healed.

The saints who abide in Christ, and in whom His Word abides, may pray for others than themselves, especially in view of the fact that we are now in the beginning of the Times of Restitution; namely, in cases where they are sure their object is not self-exaltation; where their desires for the recovery of the sick are not selfish, and where they have reason to believe that the restored health would be consecrated to good works and the glory of God.

In such cases we may upon request pray for the recovery of the afflicted or imbecile *not* of the consecrated Little Flock – the sacrificers, the Royal Priesthood. Yet even in such cases, though our faith must necessarily be strong, because confident of asking from right motives, and at a time when the Lord is pleased to grant a beginning of Restitution blessings, we should always say, as the Master did in His prayers – "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." – Luke 22:42.

However, it is not time yet to expect general healing and full Restitution work, as that evidently will not be due until the entire Priesthood shall have finished sacrificing and entered with their Head

and Chief Priest, Jesus, into the glories and perfections of the Heavenly state, or condition, typified by the Most Holy.

PRAYER FOR KINGS AND GOVERNMENTS

In his Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." (I Timothy 2:1,2.) Other Scriptures tell us clearly that the kingdoms of this world are *not* the Kingdoms of our Lord. (Luke 19:11,12.) They inform us in an indirect way that the world would not appreciate the fact that the affairs of the present order of things are all under the supervision and care of Satan (Matthew 4:8,9; John 14:30); that the Lord will not set up His Kingdom of righteousness *until His appointed time*. When that time shall come, all kings and priests and people will serve and obey Him. (Daniel 7:27.) His reign will be the one that will be "the desire of all nations."

But the Bible gives us to understand that, in the meantime, these present kingdoms are given the opportunity of seeing what they can do under these conditions. (Daniel 2:37-44.) When the typical kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the kingdom was given to Nebuchadnezzar, it was for the opportunity of seeing what his kingdom could do. It might be righteous or unrighteous.

And so it has been from the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar down. They are all Gentile kingdoms, and not representatives of God. All these various kingdoms are demonstrating various principles of government. Mankind under these kingdoms are learning lessons of experience which will be valuable to them in the future. Under these kingdoms we have seen man battling for rights. Sometimes they have been defeated, and sometimes they have been victorious – as the case may have **[R5204 : page 89]** been. In the various battlings we have seen righteousness and unrighteousness striving together; but with all, *policy* rules.

Under all the kingdoms mankind has demonstrated that no government by imperfect man can rectify the difficulties which confront humanity. We cannot abolish sin and sorrow, crying and dying. Had only *one* king or *one* nation been permitted to experiment with the race, we would not have known whether or not *other* nations might not have been successful, had they had the opportunity. Each nation in turn seeks to be the universal power, and each claims to be the better government; as, for instance, the American Government wants to give better government to the Filipinos, and Great Britain wants to give better government to the people of South Africa. What do civilized nations and tongues do in less civilized lands? What can they do for the betterment of conditions? In all these countries, in all their endeavors, they show that selfishness dominates.

POWER USED FOR SELFISH PURPOSES

We see the fact demonstrated that if one nation had really the power to bless others, it would not bless them without taking advantage of them. Our civilized nations in heathen lands use their power in a selfish way, taking money away from their fellow-creatures. Instead of leading them to higher and better conditions, things have generally been conducted upon a commercial basis. And these very people who have more or less taken advantage of others in their extremity and need, and those people who have been taken advantage of by fear, will all no doubt learn some good lesson from these experiences.

God is permitting the nations to learn these various lessons, before setting up His Kingdom in great power and glory. When His Kingdom shall be established, the contrast between its government and all these other governments will be so marked that all will have a great deal to learn. No doubt many who suffered from injustice will be all the better prepared to appreciate the better government when it shall come in.

In the meantime, God's people who are being called out to be members in the Body of The Messiah are not told to say, "These kingdoms are not doing well and our Kingdom will show this." On the contrary, we should speak encouraging words: "Your nation is seeming to do about the best it knows how to do. As it gets more intelligent, it strives for a better government."

SYMPATHY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

We who belong to the new Kingdom are as citizens in a foreign country. We see that we are more or less influenced by the condition of the things of this world. We have sympathy with mankind. We are glad that a New Dispensation is coming in. We see that these who are striving to make things better have a herculean task. If they were to give it up to us it would take all of our time; and under present evil conditions we could do no better than they are doing. We have great sympathy for **[R5205 : page 89]** kings and princes. They do well to accomplish so much, with sin in every direction.

Our sympathy would lead us to consider them kindly in our minds. And we may pray for them such wisdom as God sees best. It would not do for us to request of God that one of them should be healed, if he were sick. If we had some means of helping, we should use that means; but as for the results, we should remember that these lie in the hands of God. We should help in any way we can. We are not to specify, but merely to pray God's blessings upon these kingdoms.

We are interested in these kingdoms because we are interested in mankind in general. We wish to live a peaceful and godly life, that we may have that much more opportunity for reading and studying. (I Timothy 2:1,2.) We are glad if there is peace in the earth now; and we do not intend to quarrel. We intend to pray for these rulers; for we do not believe that they are at heart black or evil intentioned. Perhaps they are trying to do to the best of their knowledge what would be

best for all. Most of the monarchs of Europe are not wishing to pull the people into war.

PRESENT DAY BLESSINGS

As to the people who are keeping such a wonderful government in our own land, we see how they are having persons to watch every building that is being erected; how they give special attention to the fire department and the water department that there may be a proper supply and purity of water; and how they care for the general health of the city, providing for quarantine, etc., etc. Those who have charge of the school systems for the education of the young, and of the hospital systems, are doing a great work!

We should reflect that ours is a happy day in comparison with what it would be if we were living as people did in the time of the barbarians. When we see the wonderful things which are being done today – the great buildings, bridges and other wonderful improvements – we say, "What is man! Surely a wonderful piece of Divine mechanism! What things he can do even in his imperfect condition! And what will he not be able to accomplish when Messiah's Kingdom is here, which will put stripes on the disobedient, and utterly destroy those who will not come into harmony with its rule of righteousness!"

We are glad that things are moving as well as they are. Instead of berating the people who are the leaders, we prefer to think that they are well intentioned people. We can well pray for such without any difficulty in mind. And we can feel glad and thank God that these people take care of us as well as they do.

Our prayer to God for kings, etc., is that He will so overrule and direct among the nations as would be most in harmony with His wise plans, for the blessing and development of the Church now being selected. For though God has given over the world to the rule of the "Prince of this world" *until* the full end of the Gentile Times, yet God

has not given unlimited power. The wrath of man shall not work ruin to the Plan of God; for He will cause the wrath of man to work to His praise, and all that will not so work He will restrain. (Psalm 76:10.) This is what the Apostle has in view: Pray God's guidance and direction over all the affairs of life and over rulers to the end that the piety, sobriety and growth of the Church may be conserved.

FORMAL PRAYER

"I often *say my prayers*;
But do I always *pray*?
And do the *wishes* of my *heart*
Go with the *words* I *say*?
I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of *words alone*;
For *words without the heart*
The Lord will *never hear*,
Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are *not sincere*."

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