

## PRAYER THE VITAL BREATH OF THE NEW CREATURE

"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." – Luke 18:1.

JESUS spoke a parable, of which the gist, or import is, "That men ought always to pray and not to faint." That parable tells how even an unjust judge would, because of importunity, heed an appeal for justice and would finally yield to its demands, although he cared little for the principle itself. In the parable the woman was importunate in her petitions for justice against those who were doing her injury. The Lord seems to inculcate just such importunity in prayer, and gives this as an illustration of how His people should continue in their prayers; not that they should pray all the time, in the sense of never getting off their knees, or of never doing anything except to pray, but that they should continue in their prayers and not grow faint or disheartened.

In order to pray properly, the child of God should know what he may pray for. Otherwise he might be asking for the wrong things, such as God would never be pleased to give him. How may we know what things are proper to pray for? The Lord gives us an intimation along this line, of what is proper. He says, If earthly parents are pleased to give good gifts to their children, how much more is the Heavenly Father pleased to give good gifts to His children. The things which earthly fathers give to their children are *earthly* things. The things that the Heavenly Father is pleased to give to His children are *Heavenly* things. The world of mankind are not permitted to call God their Father. He disowns them as children. There is only one way to come back into relationship with God, and that is the way that Jesus opened up by His death.

Were not the Jews children of God before Jesus came and died? We answer, No. The very highest expression of God's favor toward

any of them was shown in Abraham. And he was called only a *friend*. "Moses verily was faithful in all his House, as a servant." Those Jews who were not faithful were not even servants. But when Christ came, He made it possible for some to come out and pass from the House of Servants into the House of Sons. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (John 1:11,12.) This privilege was not actually granted immediately, but merely in a reckoned way, up to the time when Jesus finished His course, ascended up into Heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit upon His followers. Then they were privileged to become sons of God.

All down the Gospel Age those who receive Him have been privileged to become sons of God. All the good promises of God's Word appertain to these. This class includes not only Jews, but Gentiles, to whom the door of opportunity was thrown open, after the special opportunity which had been granted to the Jews came to an end. Thus we have become Spiritual Israelites and heirs of all the things God promised to this class of sons of God. So when we go to the Father in prayer, it is the privilege of prayer as a New Creature. Whoever has not ceased to be an old creature and has not become a New Creature has no privilege of prayer whatever. The only exception to this is in the case of the children of consecrated parents, and God's favor to them is only on account of their parents' spiritual interests.

### **THE NEW CREATURE'S GREATEST NEED**

Our text means that New Creatures should be persistent in their petitions to God. These may know what is proper to pray for, by studying the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the Prophets of old. The spirit-begotten ones may thus understand what are the rights and privileges of sons of God. To these the Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than earthly parents are willing to give good gifts to their children. – Matthew 7:11.

The *Holy Spirit* is the one thing which the New Creature needs. The New Creature is on trial for the new nature – for glory, honor, immortality. And he can receive these only as he is worthy. The terms on which he is received into spiritual relationship with the Father are that he shall mortify, deaden, the earthly impulses and seek to have the spiritual impulses quickened. What, therefore, he especially needs to strengthen him and bear him up as a New Creature is the Holy Spirit of God. Consequently God is particularly willing to give us this, and especially pleased that we ask for it. This does not mean that earthly interests will be ignored. It means that our Heavenly Father knoweth what things of an earthly character we have need of, just as He knows what [R5311 : page 277] we have need of for our spiritual welfare.

The Scriptures indicate that God has given us the instructions we need in His inspired Word, the Bible. This Word will make us more and more wise, as we grow in grace and knowledge and in His Spirit, so that in time we shall know exactly what things to pray for and what things not to pray for. At the beginning of our experience, we might not know this so well. The Lord said in speaking of prayer, that the heathen think they shall be heard for their much speaking, and that they use vain repetitions. Their prayers are *all* vain repetitions. The first petition was vain and all the subsequent petitions were vain, because they are not based upon the conditions necessary to acceptable prayer.

### **THE MOTIVE AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION**

All who have come into the Covenant of Sacrifice with Christ may realize that they have the privilege of prayer. What may they pray for? They may not pray with definiteness for earthly things, as the Heavenly Father would not answer any petitions that would not be for the good of His children. St. James speaks of some who offer improper petitions. He says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." – James 4:3.

The word *lusts* here signifies *desires*. We are not to ask to gratify fleshly desires. For instance, suppose we should pray to the Heavenly Father to send us a million dollars, telling Him that we knew what to do with the money, and how to use it in His work. The Lord probably would not give it – for we would probably be asking amiss. But it might be that we would think that we were asking wisely. Whenever we ask anything from the [R5311 : page 278] Lord, we should scrutinize our motives to see if there is any personality connected with the matter. In our own case we should ask ourselves: Do we want that million dollars in order that we may shine in the use of it? If so, such a prayer would be a grossly improper prayer. We might offer such a prayer at the beginning of our Christian experience, and the Father would not chide us for it. We would excuse a child for doing what we would not excuse in one of adult years.

In respect to this matter of prayer our Lord gives us a cue. It is this: "If ye abide in Me and My Words abide in you, ye may *ask what ye will*, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) How broad a statement this is! It might seem at first as though we might ask for *anything*. But it has very particular limitations. Who are these who may pray thus? These are such as have already become members of His Body – such as have made a full consecration of themselves, and have received the begetting of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the word *abide* means not only that they have entered into this relationship, but that they are *remaining* there, *dwelling* there; that they are members of the Body of Christ in good standing with Him.

"If My Word abide in you." For God's Word to *abide* in us implies that we have a *knowledge* of God's Word. This necessitates the studying of the Word of God, that we may know what to pray for. We should not hasten to offer petitions, and make a great mistake, and then say, I have made a mistake, and have asked for the wrong things. We should consider what the Word of God teaches on this subject, and if any one has become well acquainted with the Word of

God, he should know whether or not he has met the conditions which will sanctify his prayer. It is only after he has come to this position that he may continue to make his request, nothing doubting. But very likely he will then find that he has not a very large list of petitions that he can present. What are some of the things we may ask for?

### **SOME THINGS FOR WHICH TO PRAY**

One of the things for which we may pray is that God's Kingdom may come. We may go continually to the Throne of Grace, then, appreciating the fact that God has said that He purposes to have a Kingdom here on earth. And nothing doubting, we are to pray for that Kingdom. And as we pray, we are strengthening our faith more and more. What else may we pray for? We may also pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But is not this something for the flesh? This is a necessity, and the Lord has warranted us in praying for our necessities. We are to use our judgment the best we may; yet we are not to trust to our own efforts alone, but to the Lord's supervising care. If, therefore, the temporal supply be scant, we are to learn the lesson of frugality and care of what we have.

We should learn very early in life not to be wasteful. When Jesus fed the multitude with the loaves and fishes, and then instructed His disciples to take up the remainder of these in their baskets, He illustrated His economy. We are to eat with thankfulness what we have, if it is merely bread and water, or potatoes and salt. There is nothing to indicate that we are to ask for pie or cake or ice-cream, but for the necessities. If in God's providence He furnishes the necessities and withholds the luxuries, then we are to be satisfied, to be *thankful*. But we are to pray and not to be fearful.

What if we do not get anything, *tomorrow*? Did you waste anything today? Did you eat too much today – twice as much as you had need for? If so, the Lord will probably teach you some lesson, and it will be for your good as a New Creature. But if you have used

wisdom and economy, He will provide the things needful. As the Prophet says, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

We may pray for deliverance from the Evil One. This should lead us to see that *there is* an Evil One, and that we are not sufficient of ourselves to resist his attacks successfully. We need the Lord's help at all times, and we need to pray continually and not to faint.

We may pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses. What the Lord indicates in His model prayer is the forgiveness of our *daily* trespasses – "day by day." And these trespasses are the result of our fleshly imperfections. Our trespasses of the flesh today should be a great deal less than similar trespasses with us ten years ago or five years or even one year ago.

It is best not to use any set form of words in prayer, but merely to think in advance what you desire of the Spirit – more faith, more patience, more meekness, more love. Of course, we shall want to express thanks for Divine care and to request a continuance of the same. With such prayers, however simple, the Heavenly Father is pleased. The prayers recorded in the Bible are generally not lengthy. God accepts as our prayers all the good thoughts and sentiments of our minds, as well as those expressed by our tongues.

Other statements of our Lord and also of the Apostles seem to imply that we should not grow faint-hearted. After we have prayed for a certain thing, we should continue to keep it before our mind, and not conclude that because the prayer was not answered quickly God would never answer it. This would seem to apply to particular, individual things. Our text seems to include the thought that we should have in mind the advantages of prayer in all the affairs of life, coming repeatedly to the Throne of Grace to obtain the necessary aid.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRAYER

Will God forget us if we do not ask Him for things, and neglect to do the part of a Father? The answer of the Scriptures is, that this is not so. God has made abundant provision for His children. But we are so constituted that reverence for God and desire for prayer are among the highest qualities of our nature. The organs of veneration and spirituality lie at the top of our head. And those who are not enjoying the exercise of these highest qualities are not getting the proper blessing out of life. Instead of living in the *parlor* of their brains, so to speak, some people live in the *basement*. Our true enjoyment comes from the exercise of the highest faculties of the head. Here we can commune with God respecting the highest things, the noblest things, the best things.

The natural tendency of some is toward the *baser* qualities of the human mind, rather than the higher ones; that of others is toward the *nobler* sentiments. But all are imperfect. Therefore when any have turned from sin and come into the School of Christ, they are instructed to pray, because this will enable them to get the best results from their own natural combination of faculties. By coming to the Lord with regularity in prayer they are enlisting the best qualities of their own minds. Thus the New Creature is using the highest faculties of the old nature to wean the old creature from the natural habits which he had cultivated through weaknesses of the flesh.

### BLIGHT FOLLOWS NEGLECT OF PRAYER

There is a great blessing that comes from prayer! We see that if prayer be neglected, a certain amount of blight comes in; whereas if the New Creature persists in coming to the Lord in prayer, he thus uses the higher organs [R5312 : page 279] of the mind. He brings out the highest qualities, which will make for Righteousness and Truth, and for the growth of the New Creature. And the New Creature, making use of the higher organs of the brain, makes progress in character-structure and in the Lord's service.



Prayer is the vital breath of the New Creature. We cannot control, nor get the best out of our old bodies except we conform to our Lord's instruction to pray. If prayer was appropriate for our Lord, who was perfect, if He needed to go often to the Father in prayer, even so it is necessary for us to go to the Lord in prayer that we may be more and more transformed by the renewing of our minds. This does not mean that we should be always *on our knees*, but that we should go with regularity; if possible at least every night and morning.

Some may prefer to stand when they pray, and some to kneel; some to have their eyes open, others to have them closed. In all this the Lord leaves us free to exercise our own judgment. But some *formal* approach to the Lord every day should be observed. Not only should we have special *seasons* of prayer, but we should have the *spirit* of prayer, which should be with us in all life's affairs. As we are going about the duties of life, we should think, Now I am looking for the Lord's will and way. What shall I do about this matter? And, not stopping to pray again, we think as to what would be the Lord's will. Thus we shall have the Lord's blessing and guidance on that day in everything that is good.

Some persons of active mind have the tendency to make light of Divine guidance and to say, I know what to do. Nobody need tell me – neither the Lord nor anybody else. Such are likely to have this tendency grow on them, and to be unlikely to seek any special counsel.

But the child of God should feel that it is a privilege to have the Lord's approval of every thought, every act and every word. What we do is God's work, not ours. And because it was done a certain way today, does not mean that it would necessarily be done so always. There are certain things that are as fixed as the hills, and others that are not. So with our experiences. The Lord may give us one experience today, and another tomorrow. Today He may be leading



us by the still waters and in green pastures; tomorrow the pathway may be thorny and through rough places. Thus day by day we grow in knowledge and grow in love, and we should be ready for whatever experiences may come to us:

"Content whatever lot I see,  
Since 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

