

PRAYERS THAT ARE HEARD

– JUNE 20. – PSALM 141. –

MANY MAY WORSHIP, FEW MAY PRAY – ONLY THE SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS – THEIR FREQUENT NEEDS – "GOD'S EAR OPEN" – THEIR PRAYERS ARISE AS INCENSE TO HIM – LEARNING TO PRAY – WHAT TO PRAY FOR – WATCHING FOR ANSWERS – THE BREATH OF LIFE SPIRITUAL.

"Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me." – V. 9.

WHEN we think of the greatness of the Creator, Maker of Heaven and earth and all therein, and when we think of our own littleness, our weaknesses and imperfections, we are amazed that our God has made any provision whereby even the best of His creatures might hold communion with Him in prayer. We should not fail to note the difference between worship and praise, which anybody may render to the Lord, and prayers and supplications, which are acceptable only from the Lord's consecrated people and their children while still minors.

To illustrate: It is one thing that the populace may cheer a governor or a king, may remove their hats or bow their heads, but it is quite another thing for that same conglomeration of people to be received by the king or the governor into association as his friends or to have communion with him, to tell him about their matters, to have his counsel and guidance. So, while God has an interest in the whole world of mankind, a deep interest, it is not the same interest that He has in His Church. And by His Church we mean, not any sect or party or denomination, but those individuals who, regardless of sectarian lines, have entered into a heart covenant with the Lord, renouncing their own wills and accepting,

instead, the will of God in Christ. These are the Bible Church, whose names are written in Heaven. (Hebrews 12:23.) These are the ones addressed in the Bible as the saints of God, and respecting whom it is declared, "All things are yours;...and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." – 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

This Church of God, in all the world, is not numerically strong. As the Bible says, it contains not many rich, not many wise, not many learned, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 1:26; James 2:5.) Their reigning, their power and their control in the world's affairs will not **[R5692 : page 155]** come until they shall have experienced the resurrection change, and Messiah's Kingdom shall be fully inaugurated. Then these shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years. – Revelation 20:4.

WHO MAY PRAY

Strangely enough, many seem to have gotten the thought that anybody, at any time, may rush into the presence of the Almighty God with his requests. The intimation even seems to be that God is unhappy because people do not come to Him thus. Such views of prayer indicate a lack of Bible study, Bible information. The Bible teaches that prayer is a great privilege.

Jesus declared, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Furthermore, He indicated the restrictions upon those who would approach the Father through Him – they must be His disciples; and to become His disciples, they must take upon themselves certain obligations or vows. They must renounce their own wills, and accept the will of Jesus. They must lay all upon the altar; otherwise they cannot be accepted, cannot be presented to the Father, cannot be begotten of the Holy Spirit, cannot be styled or treated as sons of God, cannot be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in His coming Kingdom – cannot have the privilege of sons of God in the present

life either – the privilege of prayer and of Divine fellowship, communion, instruction.

All these special blessings the Bible reserves for those who become especially, peculiarly, the sons of God. Even in respect to these who have become sons of God, Jesus intimates a danger of their losing the privilege of prayer. He says, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye may ask what ye will" – not otherwise. – John 15:7.

We believe that misinformation on this subject of prayer has worked disadvantageously to many. The majority, holding intercourse with evil, only occasionally flee to the Lord in some trouble, and that without entering into any covenant with Him or receiving any recognition as sons, and without desiring this. If they were rightly informed, the effect upon their minds at first would be to stun them. They would awake suddenly to the realization that they are without God in the world; that their affairs are not subject to His supervision; but that as part of the world, they are under the general curse, or sentence of death.

The highest qualities of the human mind, which lie at the very top of our craniums, are the organs of worship, reverence, veneration, spirituality. Even the wicked, at times, feel that they will please God by praying to Him and asking Him for some favors. They have not learned that God has addressed them, saying, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to take My Covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest My words behind thee?" – Psalms 50:16,17.

It is high time that the difference between the Church and the world shall be more distinctly discerned, and that the privileges of the Church shall be appreciated. The effect would be to awaken in others a sense of their need for God. Then, in their hours of distress, realizing that they have no God, would they not be the more likely to seek Him earnestly in His appointed way, through the Lord Jesus

Christ, and through a full consecration – the only terms upon which Jesus would accept them and be their Advocate with the Father, and secure for them the title and privilege of sons of God, valuable both for the present life and for that which is to come?

INCENSE, PRAYER, BEFORE GOD

The Prophet David, in this lesson, pictures the Christian in his distress coming to God in His appointed way: "O Lord, I cry unto Thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto Thee. Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense." This is the same thought elsewhere expressed in the Bible – that the prayers of God's people rise up before Him as a sweet perfume. (Revelation 5:8.) And, by the way, we remember that the incense of old, which typified the prayers of the saints, was composed of a rare mixture of spices, giving forth a peculiarly sweet odor; and that nobody was allowed to make that incense except the priests who were to offer it. (Exo. 30:34-38; 37:29.) Thus again the Lord shows us that the privilege of prayer, of approaching Him in an acceptable manner, is confined to the antitypical priests, called by St. Peter the Royal Priesthood. – 1 Peter 2:9.

Only those of the Lord's people who have consecrated their lives to Him, even unto death, are thus represented as members of the sacrificing Priesthood, to whom the Apostle wrote, saying, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1.) The Lord has pledged to this particular class that He will hear them, yea, that He will answer them – not necessarily according to their natural preferences, but He will heed the spirit of their cry and give to them, according to His Wisdom, the experiences and blessings most helpful.

WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR

Our prayers should be in harmony with our endeavors. Thus in our lesson the Church of Christ are represented as praying the Lord to set a guard over their lips. The thought is that they are striving to keep their lips, their mouths, from utterances that would be injurious to others; and that, on the contrary, they may be helpful to humanity and honoring to God. Also, because they are striving for heart purity and to avoid practising wicked works with evil doers, therefore they pray in harmony, "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity; and let me not eat of their dainties" – assist me in my determination of opposition to all these things.

How appropriate that the Lord's consecrated people should scrutinize their lives when they come to their Father in prayer! How appropriate for them to note to what extent their blessings, luxuries and dainties have come to them contrary to the principles of justice and love – contrary to the Golden Rule! Whoever intelligently thus prays will surely be examining his life to rectify his business relations, so that he may not eat of the dainties which would come from injustice or oppression, but, on the contrary, rejoice in the commonest things of life if they be the best procurable in harmony with the principles of righteousness, the principles of love.

"LET THE RIGHTEOUS SMITE"

The class that are thus in fellowship with God, through prayer and through seeking to be obedient to His arrangements and laws, are so fully engaged that they are able to say, as in this Psalm, that they will take no offense if reproved by the righteous – rather the reproofs of such will be to them like an excellent oil, such as a guest received from his host in ancient times. The true Christians, the class who have the fellowship with God through prayer, have the qualities of heart which the Apostle describes as the fruits of

the Holy Spirit; namely, meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love. (Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Peter 1:5-8.) [R5693 : page 156] And because possessing these, they are not easily offended, but indeed are glad to have such experiences and lessons as the Lord's providences may direct to them – especially if these come through the brethren, and particularly if the brethren who use these administer their rebukes in a Christian manner – in meekness, remembering themselves, lest they also be tempted. – Galatians 6:1.

In such cases, the reproof will be a blessing from the Lord – if given in that spirit and received in that spirit. Neither their heads nor their hearts are broken by such Scriptural reproofs; and they themselves learn to administer admonitions to others in similar manner, so as not to injure, but to help. Their prayers are for each other in what seem to be calamities; and in harmony with the Lord's promise, these seeming calamities and all the affairs of life shall operate together for good to those who love Him, to the called ones according to His purpose.

The American Revision gives the wording here differently: "As oil upon the head; let not my head refuse it: for even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue."

In hyperbole the Prophet declares the distress of the Church as affecting them even to death. "Our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol (the grave), as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth" – like the fragments made by the wood-cutter, who considers the chips not worthy to be gathered. But while this may be the estimation of God's saints from the worldly viewpoint, not so is it with God, as the following verse implies: "But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord: for in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute."

But whatever affliction God's consecrated people may have in the present life, whatever rejection may be their experience at the

hands of the great or the wise of this world, they have God's promise of glory, honor, immortality, in the future. In Him they trust, and He will not leave them desolate. He has declared, "The gates of Hell (Sheol, Hades) shall not prevail against them"; that is to say, the power of the grave shall not prevail against the Lord's Anointed, Christ and the Church – they shall come forth from the power of the tomb glorious in the First Resurrection majesty to reign a thousand years. – Revelation 20:6.

"KEEP ME FROM THE SNARES"

Satan is represented as a fowler, a hunter, who is seeking after the Lord's people even as earthly hunters are prone to hunt after speckled birds. Before the invention of powder, the hunters more particularly entrapped their prey with snares and pitfalls. While Satan is represented as being the great Arch-enemy, he also is accredited with using agents. Chief amongst his agents, according to the Bible, are those fallen angels of whom he is the prince – "the prince of devils." But he has amongst men many workers of iniquity. These are his servants whether they realize it or not.

As Jesus declared, "His servants ye are to whom ye render service." In consequence of this rule, we understand that many are professedly servants of God who are deceiving themselves, who are really the servants of the Wicked One; for his works they do, as Jesus said. They colabor for the upbuilding of unrighteousness, iniquity, injustice, and in holding down the Truth and in misleading the people.

The Lord will help His people, He will deliver them from the various snares of the Adversary; and eventually Satan and all his cohorts will fall into their own snares. Thus, in ancient times, when the Egyptians thought to capture the Israelites at the Red Sea, the Lord opened the way for the Israelites and they escaped; while their enemies pursued after them, and were themselves entrapped and overwhelmed.

Similarly, in the great Time of Trouble that is approaching, apparently Satan and his servants will be overwhelmed in that trouble in a manner not expected by them. The Church will escape those things coming upon the world and will stand before the Son of Man, changed in the power of the First Resurrection and called to be with Him as His Kingdom class. But the world will be ensnared in that great Time of Trouble. Yet, thank God, it will be for their advantage as they learn the ways of the Lord more fully, and great will be the blessings of the Almighty coming to them!

