

## **PRIVILEGES OF THE THRONE OF GRACE**

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

WHILE these words of the Apostle have always been applicable to the people of God, they are especially important to us, for we realize that we are now living in this very evil day to which he referred in his letter to the Ephesians; that it has already come, and that only those who have put on the whole armor of God will be properly equipped to withstand the assaults of the enemy. His instruction that the Christian supply himself with the whole armor of God indicates a need for the armor, a difficulty in withstanding the attacks to be expected in this day, and the fewness of those who will eventually stand. The exhortation is not to take merely the shield of faith, not merely the helmet of salvation, not merely the breastplate of righteousness, not merely the Sword of the Spirit, not merely the sandals of preparation, not merely the girdle of Truth; but all of these. The implication is that we shall need all of these if we stand all the assaults to be expected in the evil day.

Alas, how few seem to realize the importance of this armor which God has commended! Their difficulty is the result of their not recognizing the time in which they are now living, of their not being sufficiently awake, of not being zealous to search the Scriptures, and to arm themselves therewith for the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty.

But with all the preparation the earnest Christian may make, he should see to it that there is a direct and continual communication between his heart and his Lord. In the Bible God has given us His Message, His promises, His instruction, in

advance. Elsewhere St. Paul has declared that this Word "is sufficient, that the man [R5745 : page 243] of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." We appreciate this assurance and also realize our own unworthiness, our littleness and our imperfections. But despite all these our Lord has assured us that we may approach with courage the Throne of Heavenly Grace and there obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need – and forgiveness of sins.

This promise of forgiveness does not include the thought of original sin; for that is forgiven us at the time when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord; and therefore it need not be remembered day by day. But, having surrendered our will to the Lord and having started out in the narrow way, we should know what our reasonable service to Him would include. (Romans 12:1.) We have need of every provision that He has made for us. It is our daily transgressions that require daily forgiveness. Any one, therefore, who would be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in close touch with Headquarters. This he is privileged to do by coming daily to the Throne of Grace.

If we would contrast the privilege of approaching God with that of approaching earthly potentates, we would see a marked manifestation of God's favor to us. With the King of England or the German Kaiser or any other earthly sovereign, the dignity of the throne is maintained so that it is difficult for any to approach. One must earnestly desire to do so. And if he would come into the king's presence, he must wear a certain style of dress, observe a certain etiquette, and also have a proper introduction. If the king were gracious, an interview might then be granted. But our God, the Mighty Creator of the Universe, has graciously granted to each one who has been begotten of the Holy Spirit the privilege of bringing everything to Him in prayer – all his needs, all his difficulties – and of calling Him by the endearing name of "Father." What wondrous grace!

Then each of God's children before approaching the Throne of Grace should seek to know what things are approved of the Lord and what things are disapproved. It should be the one ambition of the child of God to know the Father's will and to guide his affairs accordingly. But taking it for granted that our hearts are fully submissive to the Lord's will, the Apostle is here describing the Christian soldier who has put on the whole armor of God, or who is putting it on, and who is seeking to come up to the highest standard. He will need, with all his armor, to cultivate and to use the privilege of prayer. – Ephesians 6:18.

### **THE MANNER OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER**

The foregoing reference tells us how prayer should be offered – "praying always *with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" We should lay emphasis on the words "*in the Spirit.*" Contrast this sort of prayer with others which are not "in the Spirit," but merely formalistic. We know that the heathen have great formalities in their prayers. The Chinese, for instance, have a wheel on which certain prayers are inscribed, and they think that the more times the wheel is turned around the more times the prayer goes up to their god. These are vain repetitions. But the Chinese are heathen – they have not learned of the true God. Others approach the **[R5745 : page 244]** true God, using vain repetitions, not knowing what they want or what is best for them or what is God's will. Some Christians use printed forms of petition which are not really their own sentiment or spirit, but which as worshipers they offer to the Lord in a more or less perfunctory manner. Some prayers are represented by beads. These are used by our Roman Catholic friends. Each bead represents a prayer, and the repetition is supposed to help the worshiper. He counts these beads over and over, repeating his prayer over each bead.

All these endeavors on the part of humanity, heathen and Christian, to approach God in prayer indicate that there is a

recognized need of Divine assistance. But God is not to be approached in a merely formal manner. He is not to be mocked. If we should approach an earthly king in such a perfunctory way, he would see through the hollowness of the petition and would resent it. And so we may know that if we come with merely a lip service to God our prayers will not be heard. We must remember, too, that only those prayers are acceptable to God which come from those in covenant relationship with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way by which we have a right to come to the Almighty addressing Him as "*Our Father.*"

Reverting again to the text, "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication – in the Spirit," we understand the Apostle to mean that with every prayer we offer, whatever may be our petition, there should be an earnestness of spirit. The prayer must always be offered "in the spirit," with heart-appreciation of what we are doing. Otherwise it would not be acceptable to God. It must be a "*supplication,*" an earnest entreaty. When we pray to God, we are to "watch thereunto, with all perseverance" – having importunity in prayer, not soon growing weary if our petitions do not seem to be quickly answered. We are not to pray for the things that the Word of God does not justify us in believing are the Lord's will, but for the things which we believe are His will; and we are to *really desire* what we ask for. Then we are to watch for the fulfilment of our prayers, and thus be prepared for the blessing when it comes. Our Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask Him. – Matthew 6:32,8.

### **SELFISH PETITIONS UNJUSTIFIED**

The object of prayer, then, is to benefit *ourselves*, and to bring us into that attitude of mind which will be in heart-readiness to receive our Father's blessing. God does not wish to give His choicest blessings where they would be fruitless. When He gives us these blessings, He purposes that our hearts shall be in that

condition which will assimilate them and bring forth fruitage. We must ever be in an attitude of full submission to His will. We know that our Heavenly Father not only has the fullest knowledge of our needs, but is waiting to bestow His richest gifts upon His children, as soon as we are ready for them. Then let us never come before Him with vain, meaningless repetitions.

While the world would pray merely for food, clothing, temporal blessings or for victory over their enemies, we as God's children should yield up our wills to Him and pray in the words of our Master's exemplary prayer: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." Then, "Give us this day our daily bread," whether it be little or much – not saying what kind of food, but simply receiving what He sees we need. We have placed these matters entirely in the Lord's hands. We ask especially for the *spiritual* Bread. Our prayers are to be along the lines of the *Spirit* and not of the *flesh*. We are to pray only incidentally for the earthly things, because we have consecrated our bodies to God. Since the body is to die, since it has been accepted as a sacrifice, we are to seek to perpetuate that body which we have given to the Lord only long enough for our spiritual development and testing and for the completion of whatever work He has for us to do. We are also to be willing and glad to surrender it as soon as the Lord is ready to consummate the sacrifice. We have it now only as the instrument of the New Creature.

As New Creatures, then, we are to pray always in harmony with the interests of this new nature. We are to hunger for the Bread from Heaven and to feed upon it. We are to develop the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. We read that the Father is more willing to give good things to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. So then, we are not only to pray in the Spirit, but as the Lord's Word indicates, our prayers are to be along the lines of the Spirit, of the New Creature, whose needs

are first in our sight and in the Lord's sight, and whose interests the Lord is especially pleased to bless and to have us consider and pray for.

## **THE CHRISTIAN'S VITAL BREATH**

The logical conclusion of all this is that the Lord's consecrated people would have little to pray for of an earthly kind, realizing that with the Church the end is not restitution, but sacrifice unto death, and then the glorious resurrection. Therefore the prayers of the consecrated should be for grace to meet in a faithful spirit our various trials and difficulties while we are putting on the armor, and likewise after we have put it on, and are learning how to use the Sword of the Spirit, how to resist the Adversary, and the foes entrenched in our own flesh – our Philistines. We need much grace to be rightly exercised by the trials and the assaults of the enemy and to realize that all these things are to work together for good to us who love God, who are "the called according to His purpose." We are learning day by day how to "make our calling and election sure."

The Lord's people are encouraged to take part in the prayer meeting, and individually they are to approach daily the Throne of Grace. Our Lord has declared that where two or three are met together in His name He will be in their midst. When a petition is made having something of general interest, we are to unite our hearts that the blessing may be spread abroad and extend to many hearts. The suggestion is that the Lord's people should do considerable of their praying in fellowship, in cooperation. But this would not hinder our private praying to the Lord, hourly if need be, telling him of our realization of our faults and our weaknesses and asking for the application of the precious merit of our Savior's sacrifice to remove every spot and every wrinkle from our garments. Such prayer is the very essence of the Christian's life, his "vital breath."

We find that the encroachments of the Adversary and of the world and of the flesh are liable to discourage [R5746 : page 244] us or to entangle us with the things of the present life. But the Lord has made it so possible for us to approach Him that we can go to Him with *any* trial, *any* difficulty, and be sure that our petition has Divine attention and will have Divine aid. We have spoken of our fleshly weaknesses as sometimes hindering us from prayer. There is a disposition on the part of many Christians, after having done something that has wounded the conscience, to avoid going to the Lord in prayer for awhile, to dread to go, to feel ashamed to go – [R5746 : page 245] thinking that they will feel better about it afterwards. This course is fraught with great danger; for it is likely to hinder our spiritual growth. Therefore it should not be permitted. We should realize that there is all the greater need of our going then to the Throne of Heavenly Grace. The Lord has known of our weaknesses in advance. He knew beforehand of our failure, and wished us to profit by the experience, that we might, in harmony with our prayers, become stronger against sin, against everything displeasing to Him.

### **ONE OF SATAN'S CHIEF METHODS OF ATTACK**

The Adversary has to do, no doubt, with seeking to interrupt our prayers, our communications with the Father. One of our hymns declares that

"Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees."

We need not go to this extreme of thought, that Satan really does so tremble; but we may know that he realizes something of the power of prayer in the life of the child of God, and one of his chief lines of attack is to seek to cut off our communication with the Lord. Just as in warfare a skilful general seeks to cut off the enemy from its communication with headquarters, with its base of supplies, so with Satan. If he could succeed in cutting off our

communication with the Heavenly Courts, we would be so much more liable to fall under his mischievous and wicked assaults. Then we would indeed be helpless, without Divine direction.

Is it asked, What could Satan do to cut off our communication? We reply that there are various ways of intruding upon the human mind – thoughts may enter the mind while the child of God is at prayer or at other times – thoughts of business, of pleasure, of sin, of worldly interests and projects, etc. We do not know how much power the Adversary is given in connection with the Lord's people. We *do know* that he is powerless to interfere with their *will*. But he has power to stimulate certain organs of our minds, so that unless we are very alert we might be cut off from proper fellowship with the Lord, and our Christian courage might become more or less weakened. Thus we would be proportionately less able to resist the world, the flesh and the Adversary.

It is, therefore, proper to take every precaution to keep the lines of communication with our Heavenly Father well open. For instance, in private prayer, if there is a tendency toward drowsiness or toward thoughts going to other things, then we might lift the head, if it be bowed; or if the eyes be closed, we might open the eyes, and raise them. We are to see to it that in all our prayers and supplications these are in the Spirit, that they are not perfunctory, not formalisms. We are to see to it that they are the real expressions of our heart. We may say that a few sentences of real heart-prayer will accomplish more good for the child of the Lord than any amount of lip service. We advise that any who have difficulty in keeping the mind concentrated while in prayer should rather intensify and shorten their petitions and that in all their prayers they should see that the things they desire and pray for are in harmony with the Lord's Word – in the interest of the New Creature.

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