

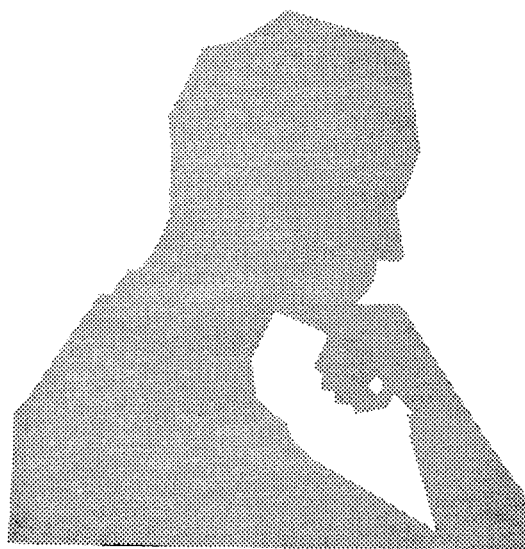
Making Prayer Powerful



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MAKING PRAYER POWERFUL



MEDITATIONS
UPON ITS PRINCIPLES
AND PRIVILEGES

This book has been produced under particularly trying conditions, when the help of Yahweh has been needed and sought in the face of Ecclesial as well as personal problems, and the validity of prayer as a means of comfort, consolation and communion has been tested in a time of great distress. The author can say that it has not been tried in vain, but that real benefit and strength has been derived therefrom. By personal experience he is able to echo the words of David: "Taste and see that Yahweh is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Ps. 34:8).

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INTRODUCTION

We live in an affluent age, when in the abundance of things possessed, many overlook their need of Yahweh and take for granted the material blessings of life. Thus Worship tends to become cold and distant; and Prayer a mere, mechanical repetition of words without power, instead of the fervent outpouring of the heart unto God.

It is not an age of Prayer.

What a contrast to the attitude shown by faithful men of old. Experiencing want, pressurised by persecution, they found help in prayer. It was a source of comfort in trouble, communion in loneliness, uplift in depression.

And it was powerful. It has been assessed that out of over six hundred prayers for specific things recorded in the Bible, no less than four hundred and fifty revealed answers are recorded. In fact, every Prayer is answered; though not always in the way we desire.

Prayer should not be indulged in lightly. Thought and care should be taken in our approach to the Father. The disciples recognised this when they approached Christ with their request: "Teach us how to pray." They felt the inadequacy of their prayers and desired to make them powerful. If we feel that our prayers are inadequate or ineffectual, and desire to make them more powerful, we must seek the means of doing so from the instruction of the Word. All the principles that go to make Prayer powerful are set forth and reiterated in Scripture. They are there for our seeking.

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We have gathered some of these principles together in this little book. Their effectiveness, however, will only become evident if we carefully meditate upon them, making them a matter of private study and application. If we incorporate these principles in our private and public devotions to the Father, we will be brought into closer communion with Him as a result.

When we open the Word of God, God speaks to us; when we engage in Prayer, we speak to Him. The person who studies all the time, but never prays is like those dull companions who are always ready to listen, but never contribute anything to the conversation. There is nothing stimulating in such company. On the other hand, the person who is always praying, but never studying, is like those garrulous people who dominate all conversation, and are never ready to listen to what others might like to say. Such conversationalists soon bore us! The ideal companion is one who is prepared both to listen and to talk, to interchange thoughts and conversation. His presence gives us pleasure, and we delight to converse with Him. He is like the person who both studies and prays. He listens to Yahweh and also communicates with Him.

All study and no prayer can fill us up; all prayer and no study can puff us up; but continual study blended with prayer will build us up.

The Power of the Word, blended with the Power of Prayer, can transform our preaching, our worship, ourselves.

— H. P. Mansfield

November, 1974

IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him"
To whom thy path is known;
Thy wisdom is to trust His care,
Nor strive to walk alone.
Commit thy ways to God. The rest
Leave to His will — He knoweth best.

"In all ways," in each rough path
Stretch forth thy feeble hands,
And seek protection from His love,
Who heaven and earth commands.
Thy strength in each emergency
Sufficient "for the day" shall be.

"In all thy ways," when clouds arise
And darkness clouds the way,
He knows the grief — appoints e'en this
Deep sorrow — oh, then, "pray";
Thy burden roll upon the Lord,
And stay thyself upon His word.

"In all thy ways," thy strength brought down,
With lingering sickness pressed;
Too weak to raise thy head, thou may'st
Rest on the Master's breast.
Tho' now the end thou canst not see,
Thou yet shalt say, "Twas good for me."

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him,"
Leave every painful doubt
To Him, whose name is "Wonderful,"
His ways past finding out.
In child-like faith His rod receive,
His precious promises believe.



SECTION ONE

The Symbol of Prayer

Incense As The Symbol Of Prayer **D**uring the Mosaic economy, the priests in the Temple, each morning and evening, burned incense on the Golden Altar just outside the veil that hid the Most Holy from view. For this purpose, coals were taken from the altar of burnt-offering in the court of the Temple. Thus contact was made with two altars: the Brazen Altar for burnt offering, and the Golden Altar for incense.

In this act of worship, incense symbolised prayer. It taught that prayer, to be really effective, must be ignited with a sacrifice that pointed forward to the Lamb of God that Yahweh declared He would provide for the needs of humanity.

The metals of the two altars were significant. Brass is the metal of flesh; gold is the metal of a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7). The basis of acceptable worship is sacrifice and faith. Sacrifice is necessary because of the nature of flesh; whereas prayer is an act of faith which brings the worshipper into the very presence of Yahweh.

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The Golden Altar of incense was placed at the far end of the Holy Place, in direct line of approach to the Mercy Seat, and, therefore, before the Ark of the Covenant. This was the most sacred place in all Israel, for the Ark constituted the dwelling place of Yahweh. He declared: "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the Mercy Seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony."

But on normal days, a curtain divided the Most Holy from the Holy Place, so that the Golden Altar of incense was as far as the priest could go. He burned incense upon it, as symbolic of prayer, by means of which it is possible to enter into heaven itself, the antitypical Holiest of all (Heb. 10:19). It is as far as we can go under present conditions.

There appears to be a special relationship between the three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place, created by the ministry of the priests between the one and the other. The principal link was between the Lampstand and the Golden Altar. The priest burned incense upon the Golden Altar at the time when he trimmed the lamps both morning and evening. These were joint ministries. They always will be. Prayer and testimony go together. The Word is a light, and as we trim that lamp, and the light burns brighter, so the ascending odour of prayer becomes more efficacious.

The relationship of incense and prayer is expressed in Revelation 8:3: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

Thus incense is aligned with prayer.

Whilst the priest trimmed the lamps and burned the incense within the Holy Place, the people outside engaged in prayer. Luke records that when Zecharias went into the Temple for that purpose, "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Luke 1:10).

Great things have happened at such a time, illustrating how powerful prayer can be. "And it came to pass at *the time of the evening sacrifice*, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Yahweh God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel . . . Then the fire of Yahweh fell" (1 Kings 18:36-38). "Yea, whilst I was speaking in prayer," records Daniel, "even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about *the time of the evening oblation*" (Dan. 9:21). The prophet was given a wonderful revelation concerning the future of his people, from the lips of this

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visiting angel. "Now Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer, being the *ninth hour*" (Acts 3:1). In their going, they met and healed the lame man at the Beautiful gate. "And Cornelius said, 'Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the *ninth hour* I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard . . .'" (Acts 10:30-31). The result was that the gospel was proclaimed to Gentiles for the first time. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the *ninth hour*. And about the *ninth hour*, Jesus cried with a loud voice, and yielded up the spirit. And behold the veil of the Temple was rent in twain" (Matt. 27:45-51). This indicated that the way into the Most Holy was about to be revealed.

All these significant happenings occurred at the hour of prayer; at the time when the incense was offered upon the Golden Altar, surely demonstrating the efficacy of prayer; revealing its power.

Before considering incense in detail notice the contrast between the two altars with which it was related. The Brazen Altar was outside, and the Golden Altar inside. The former was made of wood overlaid with brass. The latter was made of wood overlaid with gold. The first altar had no crown; the second had a crown. The first altar represented Christ in his humiliation, it was related to him as a sacrifice; the second represented him in his glory, at the right hand of the Father. The Brazen Altar was the place of suffering, and typified Christ as Saviour. The Golden Altar was the place of glory, and typified Christ as Mediator. Sinners came to the first to be made saints; saints made their way into the second to worship Yahweh acceptably.

In several places in Scripture, the fragrant, ascending incense has been set forth as the symbol of prayer. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). "Golden vials full of odors (mg. incense), which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5:8). In prayer, Christ past, present and future passes before the mind.

The word *incense* is translated from the Hebrew *qetoreth*, and signifies *to fumigate*, or to purify. This suggests that prayer is designed to purify.

And it does purify. Prayer will glorify God in word, and cause the mind to meditate His greatness. This must play a part in purifying the mind and action. It will help concentrate the mind upon hope, and centre the attention on the future

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set before us in the Word. It will confess to sins in order that they may be covered; for to speak of sin in such a context is to recognise its true nature, and provide the first step to the forsaking of it.

The Ingredients Of Incense

Incense was a skilful blend of special ingredients. It is described as “a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary” (Exod. 30:35). As choice had to be made of its ingredients, and care and skill had to be exercised in compounding of it, so careful preparation should be given to prayer. It should not be entered into lightly. A careless, casual approach to Yahweh is dishonouring to Him; there should be no easy familiar address to the King of heaven. Instead, the mind should be alerted to the great privilege of such an approach; and humble gratitude should characterise this aspect of worship.

Under the Law, incense was offered at regular periods: “Every morning . . . and at even” (Exod. 30:7-8). This suggests that it is advisable to have set times of approach unto Yahweh. It does not mean, of course, that prayer should be limited to those set times, for anytime is appropriate for the purpose. But it does imply that it is profitable to make a habit of prayer. As the Temple services opened and closed with the offering of incense, so it is good for the day to begin and close with a word of prayer.

Incense was offered exclusively unto Yahweh. Moses was commanded: “As for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for Yahweh” (Exod. 30:37). Prayer should be reserved exclusively for Yahweh. Sometimes, under stress, we might seek help of flesh, and forget the strength that God can provide. That is equivalent to offering incense unto others. Let us seek divine blessing on whatever aids we might use; and ever remember that He is greater than “an arm of flesh” (see 2 Chron. 32:8).

As the incense was consumed by the Divine fire taken from the altar of sacrifice (Exod. 30:7), so Prayer is a burnt offering, a sacrifice, for it should comprise the complete absorption of hopes, desires, and purpose in the will of Yahweh.

Incense had to be continually offered. It was: “a perpetual incense before Yahweh throughout your generations” (Exod. 30:8). This ordinance taught that prayer should never cease! As the Lord taught his disciples: “men ought always to pray and not faint” (Luke 18:1).

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Sometimes we are tested by delay in an answer to prayer. That is a challenge to faith. If we cease to pray and turn elsewhere, we are demonstrating our lack of faith in prayer, and our disbelief in the reality of Yahweh. We must be ready to say in every prayer: "Not my will but Thine be done." If we really mean this, we will not despair at delay, but will patiently wait for Yahweh to move.

The Four Components Of Incense

The elements that make up acceptable prayer are demonstrated by the ingredients of which the incense was compounded. Incense was a blend of Stacte, Onycha, Galbanum and Frankincense (Exod. 30).

Each is significant when related to prayer.

Stacte is a kind of myrrh. It is obtained by inserting a deep gash in the branches of the tree, and collecting the liquid. This, surely, suggests the principle of sacrifice. First we are reminded of the sacrifice of Christ; and we learn that sacrifice on our part, is a basic element of worship. Paul declared: "That I may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." No prayer will be acceptable to Yahweh unless the one offering it is prepared to subordinate his will to that of the Father. "Not my will but Thine be done," is the attitude required.

And that means sacrifice of self-interest if necessary.

Consider the word Stacte itself. It is translated from the Hebrew *nataph* which signifies a *liquid drop*, suggestive of a tear!

How appropriate for prayer.

Frequently prayer finds its real comfort, its most tangible blessing, its greatest benefit when tears are in the eyes of the petitioner.

The Hebrew word is derived from a root translated *drop*, signifying to prophecy, or proclaim the will of Yahweh (Ezek. 29:45; 21:2; Amos 7:16). It is translated *prophecy* in Micah 2:6,11; Zechariah 13:3. Surely this suggests that prayer must be governed by the teaching of the Spirit, according to the will of Yahweh: "If we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

As Stacte was prepared for the purpose of incense; so let our prayers express thoughts that conform to the will of God especially in regard to our petitions.

The next ingredient was Onycha. This was made from a white sea-shell found on the shores of the Red Sea. What

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would this suggest to Israel but deliverance! The minds of the Israelites would go back to the time when they stood upon the shores of the Red Sea and sung the song of deliverance unto Yahweh. They saw evidence of His power and His goodness, and they were caused to rejoice before Him.

When Onycha was burnt, it gave forth a pleasant odour. What of those occasions in life when we experience the divine goodness in deliverance out of evil! Is it not as a pleasant odour to us? Do not our hearts rejoice before our God, and do not we then realise how great He is?

Let us call to mind these occasions when we turn to God in prayer, and let thanksgiving ascend unto Him for what He has done for us in the past.

And when we make our petitions to Him, let us do so with the realisation that He has helped previously, and will do so again.

Onycha speaks of the reality of God, our utter dependence upon Him, our own recognition of His ability to deliver.

The third ingredient was Galbanum. This is an acrid smelling preparation when burnt. It is said that its main use was to keep serpents away! What a significant element in regard to prayer. The word is a translation from the Hebrew *chelbenah*, from *cheleb*, fat. The fat was always burnt in sacrifice (Lev. 3:16-17), symbolising the worshipper's energy consumed in Divine service.

Prayer can become an outpouring of energy. It can become "the sacrifice of praise to God . . . the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). To become such, we need to concentrate in prayer; to make a conscious effort to "really feel the prayers that we utter."

Consider the agony of effort, the concentration of mind, expressed in the words of Luke 22:44: "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." By our own concentration of mind in prayer, we can add galbanum to the spices that make up the incense we offer Yahweh.

The final ingredient was Frankincense. This is obtained from a spice tree which yields a white gum at the slightest scratch. It therefore speaks of the constant use of prayer on all occasions; and the ready response of the Father to it.

For He is never indifferent to the prayer of faith. He may not answer exactly as we would like, nor at the time that we would desire; but the answer will come. Even though it be in refusal of our petitions.

The Hebrew word translated "frankincense" is *lebonah*. It

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signified "whiteness," the symbol of purity. Prayer should be such: pure, without false motives, or ostentation.

Compounding The Ingredients

Specific instructions were given for the proper compounding of the ingredients. Moses was commanded: "There shall be a like weight; and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: and thou shalt beat of it very small" (Exod. 30:34).

Each of these principles is important. Consider them one by one. "There shall be a like weight." All the elements, symbolised by the various ingredients, should find a place in prayer. Prayer should be a balanced approach unto Yahweh. There is place for thanksgiving as well as confession; there is need for praise as well as petition. The Lord's prayer is such a prayer: balanced, systematic, specific. It speaks of praise, of our dependence and reliance upon the Father; of His help to us in time of need; of our hopes in regard to the future. There is in it "the art of the apothecary," a skilful blending of all necessary ingredients.

Let us become skilful in prayer. Skilfulness results from the thought that is given to prayer, and should not be measured by the expressions that stem from flesh-satisfaction and thoughtless oratory in which it is expressed; from the extent that we allow Scriptural principles to govern our desires, and not from merely fleshly emotion; from the placing of priorities in their proper order, and not from the expression of mere desire.

The ingredients were "tempered (mg. salted) together." Salt is both a preservative and a flavouring. It was an element of sacrifice (Lev. 2:13). Prayer is the sacrifice of the lips, and must not be insipid. It needs to be flavoured with the word; it should be linked with the preserving teaching of the covenants of promise. Paul taught: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). If this should characterise speech one to another, how much more the speech we direct towards God (See also Matt. 5:13; 9:49; Col. 4:6).

The incense had to be "pure and holy" (Exod. 30:35). Prayer likewise should be charged with such principles, accompanied by an effort to that end. The Scriptures teach that otherwise it is unacceptable to God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9). "Therefore, pray not thou (Jeremiah) for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them; neither make intercession to Me; for I will not hear thee" (Jer. 7:16).

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"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto Me for their trouble" (Jer. 11:14). "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth My words behind thee?" (Ps. 50:16-17).

These Scriptures teach that prayer must be sincere. Even in our failings we can be sincere, recognising them for what they are, and seeking the divine forgiveness and help in time of need.

Concerning the Incense, Moses was commanded, "Thou shalt beat of it very small." How instructive in the matter of Prayer. Christ commanded: "Let thy words be few." And in a moment of great need, when David poured out his heart in broken sentences before his God, following the rebuke of Nathan concerning his sin with Bathsheba, David declared: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). The word *contrite* is a significant one in this context. The Hebrew signifies to *beat* or *bruise*, as in beating out metal. The process reduces thick masses of metal into thin plates easily bent to any desired shape. Thus the reference is to a heart, so reduced by affliction, that it is pliable to the moulding hands of Yahweh. Let us manifest humility before our God, and we will beat out the incense of our prayers until it is "very small."

Finally, the incense had to be offered upon the golden altar, "before the testimony . . . where I will meet with you" (Exod. 30:36). The incense of Prayer takes us into the Most Holy, into the presence of Yahweh Himself. This great privilege is offered us in Christ, and Paul urges us to take full advantage of it. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . ." (Heb. 10:19-21). Again: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

What a tremendous privilege it is that we have freedom of access through Christ unto the King of heaven. Let us appreciate, treasure, and use this privilege.



SECTION TWO

Prayer in Worship

Prayer is communion with Yahweh. It is the most personal act of worship in which we can engage. What is worship? The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *worth-ship*: placing "worth" into something. Effective prayer, therefore, is an act of worth-ship, for it testifies to the value that we place on God. It witnesses to this in various ways.

Firstly, Prayer expresses our faith in the existence of Yahweh. It indicates our awareness of Him as a living Personality. Prayer is not acceptable in the absence of such a virile faith. Paul declared: "He that cometh to God must believe that He *is*" (Heb. 11:6). This is a first-principal of acceptable worship.

But it is possible to use words in prayer that lack power, because they have degenerated into mere platitudes. We need to be careful of using habitual phrases that are empty of real meaning. God must become a reality to us, and we must recognise His presence when we utter prayer, if it is to have any power.

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Secondly, a power-packed prayer will be one that stems from our utter dependence upon Yahweh. We need Him in all the circumstances of life, and therefore, by prayer, seek to reach out to Him. In contrast to this, Isaiah mentions the practise of some in his day who visited Yahweh only "in trouble." He declared: "They poured out a prayer when His chastening was upon them." Such petitions lack power, because they are only a last-minute appeal, a turning to God when every other resource has failed. God will accept even a last-minute turning to Him if the believer is genuine; but in the case of those concerning whom Isaiah wrote, it was not so. Their "prayers" lacked power because they were as mere incantations (see margin); utterances, like magical formulas, muttered in the spirit of doubt or superstition, as a last line of defence. They were not the expressions of a vibrant faith in a living God Who is powerful to save!

Thirdly, true prayer is an act of filial affection to One Who describes Himself as Father and Friend. Like Paul, we "bow our knees unto the Father" from Whom all fatherhood derives its name (Eph. 3:14-15 — *20th Century Translation*). We know the tender longing of parents to help their children; and so, with loving confidence, we turn to Him in filial affection, love and respect (Mal. 1:6) to shelter under His protective arms. At the same time, we recognise that His status as a true Father is such that He will not spoil His children, but will guide and chasten them for their benefit (Heb. 12:5-11; 5:8).

How important, therefore, that our minds shall be actively alert in prayer, fully comprehending the significance of the words uttered, and identifying ourselves with them. This requires full concentration upon the expressions of the prayer to the exclusion of all else; a complete awareness that we have come into the very presence of Yahweh, a recognition of the solemnity of the occasion.

Prayer thus becomes an effort of concentration. Paul exhorted: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." The words, *continue* and *watch* are strange words to use in conjunction with prayer. They would suggest long, verbose utterances with the eyes fixed upon others! In fact, the first word signifies *to be strong towards*, and the second word signifies *to keep awake*. To be strong towards, suggests effort, whilst a state of wakefulness in prayer requires concentration of the mind. We must not allow the mind to wander in public or private prayers, or to figuratively fall asleep. We must remain awake, or alert, by concentration upon the words spoken. Yet how frequently the mind wanders during a public prayer, so that the *Amen* at its conclusion awakens one to a sense

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of responsibility to worship? Paul knew of human weakness, and exhorted accordingly. He urged a concentration of the mind upon the matters in hand: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

Prayer Requires Condescension On God's Part

Before engaging in prayer, let us carefully call to mind the exalted One Whom we are to address, and the great privilege that is ours in being able to do so. Do not take prayer for granted. Prayer is not a matter of merely closing the eyes and using the tongue, but of coming humbly into the august presence of the great Creator, the King of heaven. Consider His high, exalted status!

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

"The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen" (1 Tim. 6:16).

These scriptures speak of His lofty eminence, and the great honour that is ours in being able to freely approach Him. His mighty power and condescending love is expressed in the words of the Psalmist:

*"He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their wounds.
He telleth the number of the stars;
He calleth them all by their names.
Great is our Lord, and of great power;
His understanding is infinite.
Yahweh lifteth up the meek;
He casteth the wicked to the ground.
Sing unto Yahweh with thanksgiving;
Sing praise upon the harp unto our God."
(Ps. 147: 3-7).*

Yahweh's ability to heal the broken in heart is demonstrated by His power in telling the number of the stars. His greatness in merciful kindness is shown by His might in the acts of Creation.

In recognising this, in acknowledging His wisdom and power, we must be prepared to patiently await for Him to choose the

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right moment to act. "I waited patiently for Yahweh," declared the Psalmist (Ps. 40:1), "and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

What a tender and meaningful expression. It expresses the feeble cry of one on the point of death, who in weakness can barely whisper his requests, and the condescension of the Father in bending down low, "inclining His ear;" to catch his faint utterances.

Thus Prayer bridges the illimitable distances between us and heaven, and conveys us to the very presence of Yahweh whose power and status is beyond the ability of mortal minds to comprehend. Speaking of His incomparable supremacy, Isaiah wrote: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40:12,15,25,16).

But though so lofty, and so far removed from us, Yahweh has promised to hear our prayers:

*"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him My salvation"*

(Ps. 91:15-16).

As Yahweh condescends to hearken unto the prayers of His children, let them treasure and use this great privilege.

Prayer Is An Act Of Communion

Prayer is an act of communion. Through it we discourse with Yahweh. He speaks to us when we study His word; we speak to Him when we respond in prayer. Thus prayer is always linked with the Word. The lamps were tendered in the Holy Place, at the time when the incense was burned upon the golden altar. When prayer and the word are our daily delight, we experience, in measure, what Moses experienced in the Tabernacle. "And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak *with* God, then he

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heard the voice of One speaking *unto* him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and he spake unto Him" (Num. 7:8,9).

Moses directly conversed with God. What a tremendous act of condescension on the part of Yahweh; what a great privilege to hear His Voice. We can do this when the study of the Word is joined with Prayer. One helps the other. "Thanksgiving," wrote Paul, "is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:5). Christ declared: "True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23).

The Word will enable us to look at life, including our own problems, from the standpoint of God, and thus will assist us to pray as we ought. Ponder the prayers of the Bible. Notice the way in which the Father is addressed by men and women of faith: "He that keepeth covenant and mercy with those that put their trust in Him;" "The Father of mercies;" "Yahweh Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;" "The God of all comfort;" "The God of love and peace;" "The God of patience;" "Our Father Who art in heaven." Notice how the prayers of the ancients ascribe glory unto Yahweh, present their petitions unto Him, speak of His past acts of deliverance and power, submit to His direction and guidance.

A study of prayers will help us to pray with greater power.

Paul wrote: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26).

Again, in this context, the Spirit refers to a mind generated by the Truth. Such will guide us in prayer, reveal to us our needs, clearly define our failings, cause us to recognise our dependence upon God, induce in us "groanings" as we recall personal failures, which we find impossible to express in words.

When Paul wrote that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," he referred to the weakness of flesh to approach God aright. The word "infirmities" is *astheneia* and signifies *want of strength, weakness*. The Spirit-truth will help our natural weaknesses, and enable us to acceptably pray unto the Father. Moreover, in the Greek, the definite article is attached to *what* making it *the what*, and expressing: "We know not *the* what we should pray for as we ought." Unless the mind is prepared by the Word, we do not know the particular thing, or failing, for which we should be praying as we ought. The Word, however, enlivens the mind in spiritual matters, and revealing to us our true state before God, induces in us the wisdom to pray for help where it is needed.

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Thus the Truth filters prayer:

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father!" (Gal. 4:6). Our approach to God in that way testifies to the reality of our claim that we are sons of God. No proper approach, no real son-ship, is possible without that "spirit."

We have seen that the Spirit-word is an advocate on earth, helping to prepare our case for preparation in heaven. However, that case, when prepared, must be presented through our heavenly advocate: the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).

Prayer, therefore, should be directed to the Father through the Son. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

No attempt should be made to separate the Father from the Son, for there is complete unity between them both (John 17:21). To speak directly to the Son, in the manner of some churches, is not honouring to him, because he has instructed that we should approach the Father. To ignore the Son in our approach to God is not honouring to the Father, because it is recorded that "he that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father also." We should respect the instruction of the Lord to direct our prayers to God in his name.

Prayer Is An Act Of Confidence

We are invited to come "boldly" unto the throne of Grace: "In Christ we have *boldness* and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Eph. 3:12). "Let us therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). "Having therefore, brethren *boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . ." (Heb. 10:19-22).

What is this boldness? It is not lack of reverence or awe; it is not an easy familiarity with the Father in the heavens, or a boldness that cheapens the approach. The word signifies

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freedom of utterance, or freedom of entrance. It means that we can approach unto the Father freely at all times, under any circumstances; it also means that we can express ourselves freely and without restraint on all subjects: pleading forgiveness of sins, making requests for help; unburdening our minds in sorrow or trouble.

The boldness is a liberty not a licence. We must not cheapen prayer by a too familiar approach to the Throne of Grace. We should be ever conscious of the great privilege in being able to come before Him, and with deep respect and love because He has made it possible. Consider the deep, reverential attitude of Abraham, the Friend of God: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes . . ." (Gen. 18:27). If Yahweh's proclaimed friend was awed at such a privilege, we should be also.

Boldness, however, suggests confidence; and it is in the confidence of faith that we approach the Father. His love and kindness, His understanding of our state is such that we can approach Him in that way. Consider the beautiful expressions of the Psalmist:

*He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy towards them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him.
For He knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.* (Psalm 103:11-14).

Does not such a statement build up confidence in us, so that we are able to approach Him freely at all times? Can you measure the height of heaven above the earth? You cannot. Nor can you measure the mercy of Yahweh! How far is east removed from the west? It is limitless if you believe the earth is round, as evidently the Psalmist did. Consider it yourself. If you take an aeroplane and fly north, distance is limited, because, as soon as you reach the North Pole, you commence to fly south. But if you fly either east or west you pursue infinity, because east never becomes west, or west, east under such conditions.

In short, His mercy is without limit, and our transgressions are completely forgiven when He covers us by His grace.

Even in punishment, the mercy of Yahweh is manifested. One of the most beautiful expressions of Scripture, illustrative

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of this is contained in Jeremiah 29:10-13: "Thus saith Yahweh, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to give you an expected end (alternate rendition: *to make your latter end an object of hope*). Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."

What is particularly encouraging about that statement? The fact that, in spite of all external appearances to the contrary, Yahweh's thoughts were of "peace and not evil" towards His people. They saw only tokens of wrath. They saw the victorious Babylonian army that had breached and destroyed the city of Jerusalem; they saw the ancient Temple a smoking ruin; they were herded together in groups to be driven into captivity. Yet Yahweh insisted that His thoughts were of peace and not evil towards the nation. In other words, what they suffered was the disciplinary hand of Yahweh, designed to correct them, intended for their ultimate benefit, so that finally He might reveal to them the fruits of their hope.

Consider, also, the beautiful words of Ezekiel to the same nation: "There shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings; and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord Yahweh" (Ezek. 14:22-23).

Cause and purpose are to be found in all the acts of Yahweh. He grants or withholds the petitions of prayer accordingly. We might wonder why our requests are seemingly ignored, or why trouble seems to overwhelm us at times, even though we are seeking desperately to do what is right. The revelation will come one day. In the meantime, we must continue to pray (Luke 18:1), in faith that God knows best, and in His love and mercy towards us, He is shaping our destiny according to His will. Let us, like David, remain pliable to the moulding influence of life, in faith that Yahweh is interested in the outcome.

Yahweh's thoughts towards His people of Israel were "thoughts of peace and not of evil to make their latter end an object of hope." His thoughts towards us are similar. We have the assurance of that in the beautiful expressions of Romans 8:31-39,

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summed up in the confident statement: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Unfortunately the A.V. has rendered as statements, comments that should be expressed as questions in the negative. For example, where it reads: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," the latter statement should be a question: "God that justifieth?" Such a question needs no answer: it itself supplies a definite negative.

Paul shows that nothing can separate the true followers of Yahweh and His Christ from Divine love. They are deeply interested in their welfare, and have done all that is necessary to ensure their salvation. Moreover, they are able and willing to help them in all the varying circumstances of life (1 Pet. 3:22). Their strength is available unto those who come unto them (Phil. 4:13), and in their love they will find the power to conquer persecution, trial or temptation. Triumph or disaster, success or failure are modified in them, and assume new meanings. Created things lose their terror for they have access to the Increate. In Christ there is the ability to rise above every situation, and see beyond them to the glory to be manifested when the love of God in him shall be fully revealed towards us. Paul declared: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). Paul's confidence will not be misplaced so long as we remain in that love (see John 14:23; Rom. 8:9; 11:22).

Concerning those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, the Lord declared: "The Father *seeketh such* to worship Him" (John 4:23). In full assurance of this, let us approach Him with confidence, recognising that He desires our worship and communion with Him.

Prayer Is An Act Of Feeling

Prayers is not merely a matter of the mind, but also a matter of emotion. We offer to Him both "heart and reins." To the Hebrew, the former was the seat of intellect; the latter, the seat of feeling or emotion. The reins are the kidneys which perform a vital function for the body, separating the poison from that which can nourish and build up. When emotion is governed by intellect it will do likewise. Hence, in the sacrifices under the law, the kidneys were included in the burnt-offering. This signified that the emotions were given up to Yahweh.

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If we really recognise God as our Father, we should approach Him with such personal intimate love. As a Father, He demands our affection and respect, and this will be shown by our attitude towards His word. We will deem that Word our great delight, and will attempt to put it into practise. The command of the Law was: "Thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). This is an all-embracing love, that will find reflection in obedience.

What is the greatest attribute that a parent desires in his child? Is it not love? An obedient-loveless child gives little pleasure to its parent; but a warm-hearted, loving child will provide great joy, even though, through weakness of the flesh, it is not always obedient. Whilst a wise parent will discipline any child that is not obedient, he will more readily extend forgiveness to one that reflects filial love, than to one who is cold-hearted and indifferent to all that a parent has done on its behalf.

Let us recognise all that God has done for us. Let us view Him as a loving Father, interested in our welfare. And let us respond back in affectionate regard for Yahweh in view of the manifold blessings He has poured out upon us. If we count our blessings, prayer will become a channel of thanksgiving and devotion towards the Father in heaven. We will be more conscious of all that He has done on our behalf, and will respond the more readily.

Isaiah described prayer as "stirring up oneself to take hold" of Yahweh (Isa. 64:7). These words define something more than mere prayer: they set forth the reaction of effectual, fervent prayer (James 5:16) on the part of one who fully realises the needs of a situation. For one to "stir up himself to take hold of God" expresses an urgent need of one in deadly earnest, so that the arms, hands, very fingers reach out to lay hold upon God. Fervent prayers with the mind concentrated upon the matter in hand and everything else excluded, can draw us into the very presence of God (cp. Col. 3:1).

God invites us to do this. "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with Me" (Isa. 27:5). Such was His appeal to Israel through the prophet. And consider the beautiful appeal of Isaiah 50:10: "Who is among you that feareth Yahweh, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that *walketh in darkness, and hath no life?* Let him trust in the name of Yahweh, and stay upon his God."

Has your life ever been dark before you? Has the way been dreary, so that problems have arisen as a flood to destroy you,

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and there seems no way out? Perhaps Yahweh is behind all this, to teach you the lesson of this verse; to give you the opportunity of manifesting faith before Him. In such circumstances, let us "stir up ourselves to take hold of Him. He has declared: "You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with *all your heart*. And I will be found of you, saith Yahweh" (Jer. 29:13).

It demands a seeking and a searching, but such will surely result in a finding, for, as Paul reminds us, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Let us blend intellect and feeling in our approaches to God; taking hold of Him through prayer when the night is dark about us, and the future seems devoid of hope. Perhaps those very circumstances are designed of Him to teach us the power of faith and of prayer, that we may more earnestly raise our voices in thankfulness and praise unto Him.

Prayer As A Disciplinary Act Of Grace

Prayer becomes powerful when we awaken to our need of Yahweh. This is sometimes difficult to do in this materialistic, self-sufficient age. Many things help to drive our need of God from our minds: the busy round of life; personal self-satisfaction induced by material possessions; the affluence of modern civilisation. These things induce a spirit of self-reliance, and prayer tends to become a secondary matter. Then, sometimes, God will shake us out of our lethargy or sleepiness by permitting a crisis to overtake us; and then prayer becomes more powerful.

The men of faith, whose biographies are outlined in the Word, were men of prayer. Yahweh was a reality to them, and they constantly sought communion with Him, pouring out their requests in prayer. Observe how frequently Paul makes mention of prayer in his Epistles. Notice for whom and what he prays. "I make mention of you always in my prayers," he told the brethren (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Phil. 4). He prayed for the Ecclesia, for individual brethren, for the furtherance of the Gospel, for solutions to problems, for the help of Yahweh in all circumstances. Trace the number of prayers recorded in the *Book of Nehemiah*, and observe how that man of action was also a man of prayer. He prayed when he handed wine to the king; he prayed when he organised the defence of Jerusalem; he prayed when he sought the co-operation of his fellow-Israelites; he prayed in the midst of war; he prayed

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for guidance when he set out organising the developing nation of Judah. Christ recognised the need of prayer, and took time to converse with God. Frequently "very early in the morning" (Mark 1:35) he sought isolation to converse with God. As the crisis of his life gathered about him, he turned to Yahweh, seeking His strength and help, crying "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36). To him, prayer was no mechanical, hurried, recitation of words without real meaning or power, but a sacrifice of the lips, an agony of desire. Strong crying and tears accompanied his supplications (Heb. 5:7).

Our prayers will become more powerful if we discipline ourselves to express them, recognising them as part of a divine channel of grace. Grace is favour, and it is part of the condescending favour of Yahweh, to permit this great privilege of communing with Him. Discipline, in that context, means that we train the mind to commune with God. If we do not do this, it is possible for prayer to become merely an habitual repetition of words. We might "say our prayers" regularly, and feel at a loss if we forget to do so. But our prayers lack power because they are a mere "wandering of desire" devoid of sense of urgency. Let us really want something, let us be in dire need, let us be really moved by gratitude at some great blessing received, and suddenly our prayers will be charged with power. Actually, we are always in need of God, always should be conscious of blessings received from Him, if we only discipline our minds to seek these things out. We can discover the help of strength, the comfort of peace, or express the gratitude of faith in communion through prayer.

What would the experience of divine grace cause us to pray for? It causes us to ascribe praise unto God; to make recognition of our need of Him; to humbly present our petitions before Him: to plead His help in need; to express our faith in His ability to grant our requests; to place our cause in His hands recognising that He knows best what to grant or withhold, and so expressing the submission of ourselves to His will.

This, basically, is what the Lord's prayer sets forth. In prayer we first elevate God before our minds, praising Him for what He is as revealed in His word. We meditate the blessings we have received from Him — our daily bread, both natural and spiritual — and thank Him for His goodness. We carefully select the petitions we desire to place before Him, or those undertakings that we propose, and for which we seek His help or blessing. We review our weaknesses and sins, and frankly and specifically confess them before Him, as we would never dare do before our fellows, and plead for His forgiveness and help to conquer our weakness. We recognise His omniscience and

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omnipotence, and express our readiness to accept His will in whatever we present before Him.

But though Yahweh will grant us of His grace, or favour, He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves. Prayer is not a magic wand to instantly wave aside all evil, and bestow upon us all good. It will not supply that which is lacking through our own failure to use the materials He has made available to our hand. We are told to pray for wisdom (James 1:5), but we will never attain unto wisdom if we neglect His word. But if we blend the study of the Word with prayer, we will receive the blessing. The farmer will never reap a harvest if he neglects to sow the seed — no matter how hard he may pray — but if he labours in the field, and seeks the blessing of God, he may receive rain and sunshine in their seasons to reap a bountiful harvest. We may pray to God that we may conquer some weakness, but if we do not channel our strength of will into that which Yahweh requires of us, we will fail.

Prayer is co-operating with God. It does not leave everything to Him, nor does it ignore His help. Nehemiah sets forth a great example. He records: "All of them conspired together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night because of them" (Neh. 4:8-9). Nehemiah met the crisis with prayer, vigilance and action. To him, prayer was not presumption. He did not make his prayer unto his God, and ignore the problem. He prayed, but he also set a watch against the enemy *day and night*. He probably recalled the words of Solomon: "Except Yahweh keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1). Nevertheless, the watchman is there, and has an important duty to perform. Nehemiah's action provided Yahweh with something to work upon. He brought God personally into the problem, and sought to co-operate with Him as much as he could in overcoming it.

We, too, must co-operate with God to make prayer powerful.

As far as personal experiences are concerned, the disciplinary grace of God might require that we endure these in order that character might be formed and strengthened in us, and that we might be better equipped for the Kingdom of God. He has called us to be King-priests in the Age to come, and it is a Scriptural adage, that priests are selected of Him who can "have compassion on the ignorant and erring" recognising that they, themselves, are "compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2). The humbling experiences of life, the patient endurance that we are called upon to manifest under trial, can develop that compassion in us. Christ had to endure much; the apostles were appointed to death; and made a spectacle unto the world (1 Cor. 4:9);

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men and women of faith "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:38). To their contemporaries, it seemed as though they were deserted of God, but we know that that was not the case. Nor is it so with us when our requests are not instantly granted, and we go through sometimes long, and terrifying circumstances, even through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death, before reaching the wide and sunlit pastures beyond. Of Christ it is written: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). His very experiences, in that regard, helped to equip him for his present position of glory as high-priest. He is able to help us in our infirmities because "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Though he was often opposed and tormented, though he had to bear the "contradiction of sinners against himself," he was not abandoned of God, as we know.

Therefore, we must not despair if our requests are not instantly granted to us, even though we feel that they are legitimate ones to make. Perhaps there is some lesson we must learn in the things we are passing through. Three times Paul prayed that he might be relieved of a thorn in the flesh" that afflicted him, but it was not granted. The request, undoubtedly, was a most unselfish one. He desired relief that he might serve God better, and preach the word with greater effect.

But he was told of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). The "thorn in the flesh" remained, and what did the brethren of Paul see? They saw one physically weak but moved by the spiritual strength to rise above his affliction. In observing him, they recognise that the Gospel was powerful to save, and that there was strength available to surmount every difficulty and and problem. They saw that God can be with a person, providing him with strength to endure. And the example set them must have had a powerful impact upon them.

So God's "strength was made perfect in weakness."

*God Guarantees
To Answer
Prayer*

All prayer is answered; though sometimes it is in the negative! When that is the case, and we are not granted the requests that we make, we must not imagine that Yahweh is indifferent to our prayers; but we should recognise that He is either refusing our requests, or is delaying to grant them, because He knows that the time is not ripe for them to be given.

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We must accept a refusal or a delay in faith.

Moreover, we should try and discover the cause of such refusal or delay.

Are our prayers in accordance with the spirit of the Word? Have we brought upon ourselves the very conditions from which we now pray for relief? Have we completely learned the lesson that the trials we are undergoing are designed to teach? Should trouble come upon us by acts of transgression on our part, have we fully cleansed our hearts from such? Will granting the petitions to us cause embarrassment to others?

We can do much to carefully assess the cause of refusal or delay in the answer to prayer.

We might pray for success in the preaching of the Word. No success might attend our efforts. Have we done more than pray? Have we been careless in the preparation of the leaflet to advertise the effort? Have we been indifferent to the work in hand? And what do we mean by success anyway?

We must provide Yahweh with the basis to bless our efforts.

The Word makes it clear that Yahweh is never indifferent to prayer. Consider the following assuring statement:

“For this shall every one that is Godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found” (Ps. 32:6). This is from a Psalm of David, composed following his sin with Bathsheba. To what is he referring? What is “the thing” for which the Godly will pray? It is for forgiveness of sins:

*“I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Yahweh;
And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin
— Selah! (Consider!).*

Through bitter experience, David had been made conscious of his transgression. For a year he had refused to acknowledge it. Now in complete realisation of his folly, he had prostrated himself before Yahweh. He had poured out his heart in repentant confession:

*“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions;
And my sin is ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Thy sight:
That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest,
And be clear when Thou judgest”* (Ps. 51:2-4).

That prayer was answered, and David received forgiveness of his sin.

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Consider Joshua's experience as expressed to Israel in his closing address to the nation: "I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts that no one thing hath failed of all the good things which Yahweh your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23:14).

All had come to pass. As Joshua reviewed his life he acknowledged the goodness of Yahweh in all circumstances. What of the defeat of Ai? What of the time when Joshua was prostrate with despair upon the ground, lamenting, "O Yahweh, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" (Josh. 7:8). He is able to look back upon these moments of deep and black depressions with understanding eyes, and realise that even in them, the goodness of Yahweh was revealed. It was necessary to the discipline of the nation, and for the success of the venture. All profited by the circumstances.

Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, expressed himself similarly: "There is no God like Thee . . . Who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart: Who hast kept with Thy servant David my father that Thou promisedst him: Thou spakest also with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled with Thine hand . . ." (1 Kings 8:23-24). Solomon prayed with confidence because the life of David revealed the hand of Providence in a remarkable manner. David, in spite of his sin, was a man of prayer who was pliable to the moulding hand of Yahweh, and through great evil and sore trouble, rose to grand heights of spiritual virtue. His very life was a prayer.

Paul sums up the matter thus: "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

In considering the petitions we make, we must not interpret delay as denial. As a parent will refuse its child the requests made to it until the time is ripe to grant them, so also does God. He knows the end from the beginning, and acts according to His omniscience. We must patiently await God to move. Generally we manifest impatience. We crave immediate action, blind to the fact that God knows best.

What should we do in circumstances of delay? First ask whether the petition is a worthy one, and then, if it is according to the Word, continue to pray for it. Christ spake a parable unto the disciples "to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18). The parable described the action of the importunate woman in pleading her case before the unjust

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judge. He refused her request; but she would not be put off. Time and again she returned to him with her urgent plea, until, at last, in desperation, he granted her request. The Lord concluded "And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" (Luke 15:5).

The *Diaglott* renders the last phrase as: "as He is compassionate towards them." God is kindly disposed towards us; not indifferent as was the unjust judge towards the importunate widow woman. He does not tire of our approaches, and grant them only through exasperation. He is "longsuffering over us" as the *Revised Version* renders it; and is ready to help.

But notice the conclusion of the parable: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Shall he find *the* faith on the earth? What kind of faith? A faith that makes a living reality of the Truth. In these materialistic, ruthless times, men seek to avenge themselves (cp. 2 Tim. 3:1-5), and do not impose trust and faith in God to vindicate them. This age, which is the age of the coming of the Son of man, is not an age of faith in prayer. Rather is it an age of dependence upon the things that can be seen and handled.

Delay in the granting of petitions made in prayer is due to the fact that the time or conditions are not ripe for this to be done. Yahweh "waits" for that time, as Isaiah revealed. "Therefore will Yahweh *wait*, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for Yahweh is a God of Judgment: blessed are all they that *wait* for Him in patience (Isa. 30:18).

He *waits*, and He expects us to wait. When we do so in patience, we demonstrate our confidence, our faith in Him, acknowledging His omniscience, witnessing to the fact that He knows when to give and when to withhold. Thus will "the trial of faith . . . be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Prayer must be answered because the very character of Yahweh demands that it be. He has promised to hear and answer prayer, and will do so, though not always at the time and in the manner that we may seek for it to be done. Prayer must be answered because God is *True* — He cannot lie: "God is not a man that He should lie . . . hath He said, and shall He not do it?" (Num. 23:19). It must be answered because God cannot forget His promise: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49:15). It will be answered because God is *Power* — He

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can accomplish His desires: "Is there anything too hard for Yahweh?" (Gen. 18:14). It will be answered because God *Hears* — and will not ignore His own: "I have called upon Thee, for Thou wilt hear me, O God" (Ps. 17:6).

The Lord Jesus summed the matter up by teaching "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. 7:11). However, we must leave it to Him to decide what is good for us, even as any considerate parent will decide what is good for his children.

Because patience and faith are required, there is a certain amount of agony of effort needed in prayer. Paul wrote: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. 15:30).

The word "strive" is *agonise* in the Greek. Paul requested that the brethren *agonise* with him in their prayers. It speaks of the intensity of feeling that one can place into prayer. Paul desired that the brethren in their prayers on his behalf, should fully enter into his hopes and desires, and identify themselves completely with his aims.

To the Colossians he wrote that "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). Again the word *agonizomai* is used, here translated *labouring fervently*. It speaks of the intensity of Epaphras' prayers on behalf of his brethren, the urgency of the outpouring of his heart unto the Father, as he endeavoured to will Him to grant his requests. If we feel a matter deeply enough, we likewise will agonise in prayer.



SECTION THREE

The Essentials of Prayer

*To Be Offered
In Christ's Name*

of Christ.

As the incense was ignited by coals of fire from the altar of sacrifice (Exod. 30:9), causing the fragrant odour to ascend, so our prayers should be touched with the sacrifice

They should be offered in his name, though addressed to the Father. He, himself, instructed that this should be done: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it" (John 14:13-14). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

Prayer, therefore, should be addressed to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul taught: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." We should combine the Father and the Son in our prayers. It is as wrong to address the Father without the Son, as it is to address the Son without

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the Father (John 5:23). There is a glorious unity between the Father and the Son that should not be sundered by worshippers on earth.

What is meant by "asking in Christ's name?"

The mere appendage of such words to a prayer as "*in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen*" is not sufficient. Such a phrase sometimes is treated as a magical formula sanctifying prayer.

It does not necessarily do so. In fact, the phrase, when used properly, is extremely meaningful, and will actually limit prayer.

For a Prayer can only be asked "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," if he is prepared to endorse it. Therefore, before adding those words, we should ascertain that the prayer conforms to his will, and harmonises with the divine purpose.

Otherwise, he will not authenticate it. He will not offer a petition to the Father in his name if he does not endorse it.

A prayer presented in the name of the Lord presumes that both the petition and the petitioner are such as he will underwrite.

Christ will only present the petitions of those who strive to live according to the Truth. Consider the following references:

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; *that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father* in my name, He may give it you" (John 15:16).

"*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).

Obviously, one who "abides in the son," would aim only to ask for things that he would endorse.

"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22).

Notice the reason that Yahweh gives for remaining deaf to an appeal: "Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God . . ." (Isa. 59:1-2).

The person who persists in turning away from God's law, will receive only refusals to prayer. This is the warning of Scripture:

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

"Yahweh said unto me (Jeremiah), Pray not for this people

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for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the word, and by the famine, and by the pestilence" (Jer. 14:11-12).

The prayers of Israel in the days of Jeremiah were useless because the nation did not conform to the requirements of successful prayer. "Rend your hearts and not your garments," was the appeal of another prophet. Prayer only becomes powerful when its impact is felt in action, and is reflected in the character of the one praying.

If we neglect the things of God in times of ease, he will not listen to us in times of difficulty. Concerning disobedient Israel, the prophet Zechariah wrote: "Therefore it is come to pass, that as He (Yahweh) cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith Yahweh of hosts" (Zech. 7:13).

A little inward searching can reap dividends. The Psalmist declared: "If I regard iniquity in my heart Yahweh will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). The Lord taught: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25).

Faith will lead us to prepare our heart to seek Yahweh.

But though Yahweh will grant us of His grace, or favour, He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves. Prayer is not a magic wand to instantly wave aside all evil, and bestow upon us all good. It will not supply that which is lacking through our own failure to use the materials God has made available to our hand. We are told to pray for wisdom (James 1:5), but we will never attain unto wisdom if we neglect His word. But if we agonise to blend the study of the Word with prayer, we will receive the blessing. The farmer will never reap a harvest if he neglects to sow seed — no matter how hard he may pray — but if he labours in the field, and seeks the blessing of God, he may receive rain and sunshine in their seasons to reap a bountiful harvest. We may pray to God that we may conquer some weakness in our character, but if we do not channel our strength of will into that which Yahweh requires of us, we will fail.

Prayer is co-operating with God. It does not leave everything to Him, nor does it ignore His help. Nehemiah provides a great example. He records: "All of them conspired together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night because of them" (Neh. 4:8-9). Nehemiah met the crisis that faced him with prayer, vigilance and action. To him, prayer was not presumption. He did not make his prayer unto his God, and ignore the problem. He

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probably recalled the words of Solomon: "Except Yahweh keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1). Solomon's words do not mean that we can ignore the need of a watchman; in fact he has an important duty to perform. The command of Scripture is to "be vigilant." Nehemiah manifested great vigilance. His action provided Yahweh with something to work upon. His prayer drew God personally into the problem, and he co-operated with Him as much as he could in overcoming it.

We, too, must co-operate with God to make prayer powerful.

We might pray for relief of tension in a personal crisis. The relief may not come. Does that mean Yahweh is indifferent to our prayer or our need? No. The disciplinary grace of God might require that we endure a little more in order that character might be moulded and strengthened in us, and that we might be better equipped for the Kingdom of God. He has called us to be King-priests in the Age to come, and it is a Scriptural adage, that priests are selected of Him who can "have compassion on the ignorant and erring" recognising that they, themselves, are "compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2). The humbling experiences of life, the patient endurance under trial that we are called upon to manifest can develop that compassion in us. Christ had to endure much; the apostles were appointed to death; and were made a spectacle unto the world (1 Cor. 4:9); men and women of faith "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:38), and we, too, might be called upon to manifest endurance. To the contemporaries, of the Lord and the apostles, it seemed as though they were deserted of God, but we know that that was not the case. Nor is it so with us when our requests are not instantly granted, and we walk through long, and terrifying circumstances, even through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death, before reaching the wide, sunlit pastures beyond. Of Christ it is written: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). His very experiences, in that regard, helped to equip him for his present position of glory as high-priest. He is able to help us in our infirmities because "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Though he was often opposed and tormented, though he had to bear the "contradiction of sinners against himself," he was not abandoned of God, as we know.

Therefore, we must not despair if our requests are not instantly granted to us, even though we feel that they are legitimate petitions to make. Perhaps there is some lesson we must learn in the things we are passing through. Three times Paul prayed that he might be relieved of a "thorn in the flesh"

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that afflicted him, but it was not granted. The request, undoubtedly, was a most unselfish one. He desired relief that he might serve God better, and preach the word with greater effect.

But he was told of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (1 Cor. 12:9). The "thorn in the flesh" remained, and provided the basis for a wonderful example. The brethren saw in Paul one who was physically weak, but who was moved by the spiritual strength to rise above his afflictions. In observing him, they were encouraged to endure their own trouble. They had visible evidence of the power of the Gospel to save; they could see that there is strength available to surmount every difficulty and problem. Such an example must have had a powerful impact upon them.

God's "strength was thus made perfect in weakness."

Prayers Must Be Offered In Faith

Prayer is essentially an expression of faith. "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). It must be presented in confidence that God has the ability to perform what is requested. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James 1:5-7).

If we have faith sufficient for our needs, we will never faint under trouble. In that case, we will never cease to pray. The Lord taught "that men ought always to pray and not faint" (Luke 18:1). Paul exhorted that the brethren "pray always" (Eph. 6:18), "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Faith will maintain prayers even in times when no answer is heard, and delay causes the heart to sicken. In such times there is inexpressible peace in "rolling your burden on to Yahweh," in placing your problems into His hands, in learning to "wait upon Him," in "standing still to see the salvation of Yahweh."

The Lord taught that the prayer of faith will be effective. He declared: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). But the "all things" referred to are those requested "in the name of the Lord Jesus" or those things that are according to his will and purpose. Thus: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything *according to His will*, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 Joh. 5:14-15).

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Basis Of Acceptable Prayer

Singleness of heart is the foundation of acceptable prayer. If a person's petitions are to be heard, his actions must accord with the spirit of them. God abominates all forms of double-mindedness. It is double-minded to pray "Hallowed be Thy name," whilst pursuing courses which bring reproach and dishonour upon it; it is inconsistent to pray for protection from besetting sins whilst running in the ways of temptation; or for faith, whilst seeking the company of the unfaithful. It is useless praying for the extension of the Truth, whilst neglecting to do anything about it; or pleading for peace, whilst cultivating the spread of dissension.

Effectual prayer can spring only from co-labouring with Yahweh in the attainment of the things asked for. "Ye ask," said James, "and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (R.V.). What use such prayers as that! Let us be careful in prayer, giving full meaning to the words we use. What use praying: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us," if we are not prepared to be merciful and forgiving! Our prayer may well be the basis of our own future indictment.

Give Christ His Title

Moreover, let us bear in mind the titles of Christ, and use them with full meaning.

Christ's full name is: *The Lord Jesus Christ*. He attained the titles attached to his name on his resurrection. In preaching to the Jews, Peter declared: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). It is pleasing to hear the full name and titles of the Lord used in prayer. Jesus signifies *Yah shall save*, and proclaims his mission as *Saviour*. Christ is the Greek form of *Anointed*, and implies the wonderful unity between him and the Father, by which he was enabled to overcome, and through which he was clothed upon with Divine nature. *Lord* is *master* or *owner*. It states his pre-eminence over the Ecclesia. The prayer that uses the full name and titles of the Lord acknowledges the full measure of his mission, his unity with the Father, and his status over the Ecclesia. Paul recommended that prayers be offered "unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). We cannot improve on that manner of approach.



SECTION FOUR

For What Should We Pray?

The scope of prayer is boundless, being limited only by the qualifying statement “according to his will” (1 John 5:14).

Granted that provision, and prayer is without limit of *place* (“everywhere” — 1 Tim. 2:8); without limit of *time* (“always” — Luke 18:1); without limit of *subject* (“everything” — Phil. 4:6; “all things” — Matt. 21:22; “whatsoever” — John 16:23).

Such words as “*everything*,” “*anything*,” are associated with prayer (John 14:15; 15:6). Nevertheless they will be governed by the qualifying clause: “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here are examples of some things for which we are invited to pray.

For men in authority that we might live a peaceable life: “I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

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For Israel: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

For the peace of Jerusalem: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. 122:6). "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6-7).

For laborers in His service: "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

For the extension of the gospel: "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19).

For conversions: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men . . . For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

For enemies: "Pray for them that despitefully use you (Luke 6:28; Matt. 5:44). "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (2 Tim. 4:16).

For pardon of transgression: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Yahweh; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Consider!" (Ps. 32:5).

For character-building: "I cease not to pray that ye may know . . . the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:16-23). "I bow my knees unto the Father, . . . that He would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . ." (Eph. 3:15-16). "I pray that your love may abound yet more in knowledge and in judgment; that ye may try things that differ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness . . ." (Phil. 1:9-10). "I do not cease to pray . . . that ye might walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10). "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness . . ." (1 Thess. 3:12-13).

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For knowledge: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:16-17). "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words" (Dan. 10:12; 9:23).

In trouble: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble" (Ps. 50:15). "In the day of trouble I will call upon Thee! for Thou wilt answer me" (Ps. 86:7).

For Protection: "In my distress I called upon Yahweh, and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears . . ." (Ps. 18:6). "This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that Yahweh is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Ps. 34:6-8). "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:5).

For Salvation: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). "Arise, O Yahweh, save me, O my God" (Psalm 3:7).

For others: "Without ceasing, I make mention of you in my prayers" (Rom. 1:9). "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:4). "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

For Confession of sin: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Yahweh. And Nathan said unto David, Yahweh also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. 12:13).

*Prayer As A
Defence*

In times of trouble men of faith had recourse to Prayer, and found therein a strength and a tangible means of help. Sometimes when crises arose, they gathered with those who

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were like-minded and made communal approach unto He Who declared: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." We append a few examples of such occasions:

Daniel faced with death: "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Dan. 2:17-18).

Asa when opposed by overwhelming odds: "And Asa cried unto Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Yahweh our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Yahweh, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee" (2 Chron. 14:11).

Jehoshaphat when Judah was invaded: "Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek Yahweh . . . and said, O Yahweh God of our fathers, are not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the nations? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not Thou our God, Who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence, (for Thy name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold . . . O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but *our eyes are upon thee*" (2 Chron. 20:6-13).

Hezekiah faced with the blasphemous but powerful Sennacherib: "And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and went up unto the house of Yahweh, and spread it before Yahweh. And Hezekiah prayed: O Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the Cherubim, Thou art God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: Thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline Thine ear, O Yahweh, and hear; open Thine eyes, O Yahweh, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou

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art Yahweh, even Thou only" (Isa. 37:14-20).

Notice, that in all these prayers of defence, the issues are plainly stated, others are drawn into the scope of the prayer, and specific requests are made. There is nothing vague in the words used; no vain repetition.

Prayer For Success In Attack

Prayer is not only efficacious for protection and defence, but also for the blessing of victory when an attack on error or evil is to be initiated. Specific instructions were given to Israel for such occasions. The people were reminded that "the battle is not yours but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15). They had to fight in faith, and go forth to war with a prayer upon their lips. They were told: "If you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before Yahweh your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (Num. 10:9).

The sound of the silver trumpets, referred to in this place, represented Israel's voice to Yahweh. It was designed to bring the people to His remembrance, and, therefore, it symbolised the sound of prayer. It is significant that in the days of Hezekiah, the sound of these silver trumpets were heard at the time of sacrifice: "And when the burnt offering began, *the song of Yahweh began also with the trumpets*" (2 Chron. 29:27). In the "song of Yahweh" the sound of the trumpets represents prayer. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were as one*, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yahweh; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpet and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Yahweh, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Yahweh" (2 Chron. 5:13). So declares the record in regard to the consecration of the Temple in the days of Solomon. Yahweh and the people were brought together in an act of uplifting communion.

In Chronicles (2 Chron. 29:27), it is recorded that the penetrating, dominating, commanding note of the silver trumpets "began the song of Yahweh." It symbolised petition, and praise, and was used in war and worship. The sounding trumpets were a call to Yahweh for help in war (Num. 10:9; 3:16), or of praise in worship (Num. 10:10).

The *chatsotserah* (trumpets), as was suitable for that which symbolised prayer, brought the assembly before Yahweh (Num. 10:3), guided them in their wilderness wanderings (v. 5), caused

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them to be remembered by Yahweh (v. 9), ensured relief from oppression, and suitably presented the various aspects of Israel's worship before Him as a memorial (v. 10). Their vibrant, penetrating sound taught that prayer should be clear, fervent, determinate, like the clear, dominant, insistent sound of the silver trumpets in the Temple worship (cp. James 5:16; Phil. 4:6; 2 Chron. 13:10).

As the trumpets stirred Israel up to take hold of Yahweh; we should be aroused to do similarly (Isa. 64:7). As they emitted an enthusiastic, ringing, joyous note, so we should express the same to God (Phil. 4:4).

When we are about to assume the initiative in any matter, let us first sound the silver trumpets; in other words, seek the divine blessing through prayer. We have many examples to that end. When Abraham sent Eliezer to seek a wife for Isaac, he called for a divine blessing on the venture, invoking it in the name of God. But Eliezer did not leave prayer to Abraham; he prayed on his own account for success in his quest. "O Yahweh God of my master Abraham," he prayed, "I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham." He then made specific request to God, having first carefully thought out what he should do, and what he required of God.

He sought a token of good. Gideon did likewise, in the signs he besought Yahweh to grant unto him. Both received their tokens. David prayed similarly to Yahweh: "Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed" (Ps. 86:17). David received this token in the ensuing military triumphs he won, and which foreshadowed the future victories of Messiah.

Paul never went into attack without a prayer on his lips. Consider the expressions of Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that utterance may be given unto me, *that I may open my mouth boldly*, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:18-19).

Let us make use of prayer in times of both attack and defence. And whilst we need to guard against descending to mere trivialities in prayer, let us realise that Yahweh understands and invites us to pour out our hearts unto Him. Meditate upon the following prayer uttered by Nehemiah, and notice the contrast between the might of God and the feebleness of His people expressed in it: "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, Who keepest covenant and mercy, *let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that hath come upon us . . .*"

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The whole of this prayer is worthy of close study. Its expressions are beautiful. To Nehemiah the trouble loomed large; but he realised that to God it was small. He prayed God that He would view it as the people saw it, whilst, acknowledging that the trouble had come upon them through their own folly, and that God was just in all that He had done or omitted to have done (cp. v. 33). When we magnify little troubles until they assume vast proportions, and feel a little ashamed to take them to God in prayer, let us remember the request of Nehemiah: *"Let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that hath come upon us."*

When we are in need of God, let us take Him into our confidence. We will find Him to be a "very ready help in time of need."

Brother Roberts' Summary Of Prayer

Brother Roberts summed up the matter of prayer in the following words: "Some things asked for we have received, and some we have not. But we should not feel discouraged if God were apparently to turn a deaf ear to all our requests. We should consider that His wisdom required the denial of all our desires, as in the case of Job (6:8-11; 13:24-26; 19:7-11). David had to say sometimes: 'O my God, I cry in the day time, but *Thou hearest not*, and in the night season I am not silent' (Ps. 22:2). Man is small and life is short, and the issues of futurity are immeasurable and can only be truly judged by unerring wisdom. For this reason, all our petitions should be qualified with the recognition of the will of God as the supreme regulator. We should in everything give thanks, and in all our petitions subordinate our own ideas and wishes to the perfect will of God.

Christ has given us an example in his own prayer to the Father in Gethsemane: "Take away this cup from me; *nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt!*" This qualification makes us certain of an answer to all our prayers, even if we do not get the answer in the very form we may ask it. This is John's reasoning on the point: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that *if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us*. And if we know that He hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' That is, true children of God would desire nothing that God sees not fit to give. What He sees fit, that He gives; and this being what we ask, we know that we always have what we ask: and here we rest, even in the midst of the more

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direful experiences, knowing that experience of evil is part of the instrumentality by which God is preparing children for Himself during this transitory age of evil, against the perfect and endless ages beyond.



SECTION FIVE

Advice on Prayer

The Place Of Prayer

Though there are places set aside for prayer, and we gather at various halls with those of like precious faith for that purpose, let us ever remember that prayer is not to be limited to such buildings or circumstances, neither is it hemmed in by walls.

Through prayer, we can reach God at any time, and in all circumstances. We can pray walking along a busy street; we can have communion with God whilst at our place of business, or when enjoying some form of recreation. The Lord told the woman of Samaria that worship is not limited to a specific city, place or circumstance, but may be offered wherever sons of God are found (John 4:20).

Men and women have poured out prayers unto God in strange circumstances, and in the most unlikely places. Thus Jonah prayed in the belly of a fish (Jonah 2:1); Paul prayed on the deck of a storm-tossed ship (Acts 27:35); Nehemiah prayed

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whilst handing wine to the king (Neh. 2:4); Hezekiah prayed on his bed of sickness with his face turned to the wall (Isa. 38:2); David prayed amid the ruins of a ravaged city in a moment of defeat and despair with his followers threatening to destroy him (1 Sam. 30:6); the disciples prayed in the open upon the sea-shore (Acts 21:5); Daniel prayed in the privacy of his house with his face turned towards Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10); Peter prayed on a mountain (Luke 6:12; 9:28); Samuel prayed on a battlefield (1 Sam. 7:9); Hannah prayed in public, silently (1 Sam. 1:13).

In addition to these moments of urgency, there were set times for prayer. Whilst it is valuable that we make a habit of prayer at certain times of the day, it is equally important that prayer be not limited to such occasions, to become expressions of mere sterile formalism.

The Posture Of Prayer

How should we set about praying? Should we stand, kneel, sit, recline, or prostrate ourselves upon the ground? There are examples in Scripture of all these forms of posture being used. It seems as though differing circumstances governed the stance adopted. Some prayed with hands uplifted like the ascending cloud of incense (Exod. 9:33; Ps. 28:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). Others stood in respect (Mark 11:25). David sat meditatively (2 Sam. 7:8). Daniel kneeled in humility (Dan. 6:10; cp. Eph. 3:14). Ezekiel and Christ prostrated themselves in excess of feeling (Ezek. 9:8; 11:13; Matt. 26:39).

The form of posture does not matter greatly; but the state of the heart does. Sometimes posture can help even in this. For example, in ancient times, many prayed with the eyes open; but we have learned to concentrate better with them closed. Some lifted up their hands, we do not do so. Whatever posture we find best suited to the circumstances, and which helps us to concentrate upon the matter in hand, is the best stance to use.

The Time For Prayer

Whilst Prayer-time is any-time, men of faith had set times in which to approach God. In Israel, the time of offering of incense was the set time for prayer; therefore, morning and evening saw the people assembled for the purpose, so that the prayers of the people mingled with the fragrance of incense as it ascended in the Holy Place. Consider the following examples of allocating set times for praying.

At morning and evening. "Yahweh, 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; and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:1-2).

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Three times a day. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God" (Dan. 6:10).

Seven times a day. "Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:164).

At noon. "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour" (Acts 10:9).

Every son and daughter of God should find time for prayer. No work, activity, or duty is so vital that it should be allowed to crowd prayer out of our lives. No one is so busily occupied that he can afford to do without it. The person who lives a prayer-less life, denies himself of access to a reservoir of power which he can tap in time of need, and which at all times brings great blessings in its train.

There is much truth in the saying: "*The family that prays together, stays together.*" Therefore, develop the habit of family prayers. Insist upon the children assembling for the daily reading of the Bible, and commence with a word of prayer. It will impress their young minds with the solemnity of the reading, and illustrate to them the importance that their parents place upon the Bible, and upon Divine worship. These exercises will help mould the character of family life, and will act as a bulwark against the pressures of the world without.

Forms Of Prayer

Prayers can take many forms. There is the set communal prayer; the prayer of the meetings. There is the private devotional prayer: the secret pouring out of our hearts to God in expressions and confessions we would not dare to utter before our fellows. There are short prayers for urgent help: when the heart is overwhelmed with trouble. There are brief prayers of thanksgiving: when we are overcome by a sense of gratitude for good received. There are longer, more formal, regular prayers: the calling to mind of the goodness of Yahweh.

All are acceptable to Yahweh. Consider the following examples from Scripture.

Ejaculatory (Latin for *swift darts*) *prayer.* Nehemiah specialised in these short prayers. It was habitual to him to insert a brief prayer into his diary (for his book is written up like a diary). Notice them: "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:19). "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (Neh. 6:9). "My God, think Thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess, Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear" (Neh. 6:14). "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not

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out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (Neh. 13:14). "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy" (Neh. 13:22). "Remember me, O my God for good" (Neh. 13:31).

Christ used this form of prayer sometimes (Matt. 11:25). Stephen's last prayer was of this nature (Acts 7:6).

United prayer. In times of crisis, men of faith gathered together to specifically pray for Divine help. Christ makes reference to this type of united prayer in Matthew 18:19-20. Other examples are frequent in Scripture. Daniel called his friends together to consider a problem confronting them and to unitedly pray for help (Dan. 2:17-18). The disciples united together to give themselves up to prayer, prior to the bestowal of the Spirit upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2:14). The Ecclesia came together to thank God when Peter and John were released by the Jewish authorities (Acts 4:24). Again, it came together in order to "pray without ceasing" for the release of Peter, when the Herodian persecution broke out (Acts 12:5). Yet (typical of flesh) the numbers refused to believe that he had been released when their prayers were answered (v. 15)!

Personal Prayer. This is the most common form of prayer. In time of crisis, difficulty, pain or pleasure, God should not be left out of account. Prayer becomes the channel of personal communion with Him. On such occasions, when we urgently need help, let us recall past occasions when help has been given to us, as well as those instances recorded in Bible history. The same God Who opened the Red Sea, brought about the defeat of Amalek, and fed Israel in the wilderness, is able to extend help to us now.

On such occasions, be specific in requesting what is required: "with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Do not indulge in vague uncertainties at such a time. Pour out your heart unto Yahweh, whilst also acknowledging that you are prepared to submit to His will in the case.

The Aim Of Communal Prayer **A** most important function of divine service is that of communal prayer. In Ecclesial meetings, the presiding brother has the onerous duty of leading the congregation to the Father in prayer. He can do so in such a manner as to move the worshippers by the words uttered, or he can leave them cold and untouched by the exercise.

Communal prayer needs to be a blend of intellect and emotion.

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As the Hebrews considered the heart as the seat of intellect, they looked upon the kidneys as the seat of feeling or emotion; and it is significant, that the kidneys were always offered in sacrifice. We read of Yahweh "trying the heart and reins," and in such expressions, the reins are the kidneys. He tries our intellect and our feelings to see if one conforms with the other; and whether both conform to His truth.

Great care, therefore, needs to be exercised in communal prayer. A prayer offered at a memorial meeting should be completely different to one offered at a meeting for the proclamation of the Word. In the former, the congregation is engaged in intimate communion with the Father; in the latter, His blessing is sought upon the proclamation of the Truth to strangers.

It is distressing to hear meaningless phrases used in prayer; that great care should be taken by the presiding brother to express his words aright. Nor should we lecture God when praying at a meeting for the proclamation of the Gospel. How often have we heard the presiding brother, on such occasions, launch into a dissertation upon the Gospel, the need of baptism, details concerning Christ's coming and our need to be ready for him. How much better, a simple prayer, direct to God, asking for His help and blessing on the proclamation of the Gospel.

There are a number of examples in Scripture of communal prayer being offered in such a way as to deeply move the audience. A remarkable instance is that of Ezra's prayer recorded in Ezra chapters 9 and 10. Ezra recognised how crucial was the occasion, and took time off to thoroughly prepare himself for the important duty placed upon him. Firstly, he carefully considered the problem. As he recognised the gravity of it, he humbled himself before God, expressing regret and shame for the national sin that had been committed. Then followed the composition of the communal prayer he intended to utter; and this exercised his closest attention. Its objective was carefully considered; its words were carefully selected; its presentation was carefully made.

It had a tremendous impact upon the people. They were deeply moved by the consciousness of their guilt, the extent of their iniquity, and the need of seeking the forgiveness of God.

Thus Ezra's prayer acted as an exhortation as well as being a petition.

The people were induced by it to act in accordance to the will of God: it had a vital impact upon their acceptance of His way.

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In like manner, presiding brethren occupy a most important position on the Ecclesial platform. Let them recognise this, and so give careful attention to the expressions of prayer that they will offer on behalf of the community before them, as they lead it into the presence of God (Cp. 3:1). Perhaps the example of Ezra can assist in indicating what can be done.

Ezra's Prayer

Ezra first carefully considered the problem that faced him, and which was to be the theme of his prayer. He took time to do this, and sought the co-operation of others to the same end. He recorded: "When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice" (Ezra 9:3-4).

He was deeply moved by the circumstances. As a member of the nation, he shared the disgrace of those who had sinned, and set about preparing his mind to seek his God to make restitution. Having made this initial preparation, and in association with the leaders of the nation, he personally expressed his humiliation and shame for the sin that had been committed, after which he proceeded to seek God's forgiveness. He records: "At the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto Yahweh my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens . . ."

Then carefully, eloquently, movingly, the petition was made that Yahweh would cover the sin of intermarriage with the stranger, and would lead the people into making restitution (Vv. 8-15). He acknowledged that God had "punished them less than their iniquities deserved" (v. 13), and he pleaded for more grace.

And the result? Ezra's prayer brought home to the people the extent of their iniquity. Then, recognising the enormity of their sin, moved by the humiliation and shame expressed in the prayer, the burden of trouble that previously rested heavily upon Ezra's shoulders, was partially lifted by being shared by all the people. "When Ezra prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God . . . the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah said, We have trespassed against our God . . ." (Ezra 10:1-2).

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This prayer awakened the people to a sense of their responsibility, and moved them to make restitution before their God.

Hannah's Example Of Prayer **C**onsider Hannah's example. Her story is well known. Hannah longed for a child, but it was denied her until after much prayer she was granted her request, and received the desire of her heart. She was to become a mother, and so fulfil the wish of every woman in Israel. Motherhood was an honored position in Israel for the covenant promised that the "seed of the woman" would bruise the serpent power, and every Godly woman desired to contribute to that end. So Hannah hoped, and prayed, and hoped and prayed again, until, in the goodness of God, her ardent ambition was realised in the birth of little Samuel.

Did Hannah then, in her excess of joy, and the love that she poured out upon the child, forget her obligations to God? By no means. Having experienced the goodness of Yahweh in the birth of Samuel, she turned to Yahweh in fervent thanksgiving. More, she attempted to repay God, and so endorse the genuineness of her thanks, by a most generous act of unselfishness: she gave the child back to Yahweh. Her thanks were endorsed by sacrifice. Yahweh's gift to her found response in her gift to Yahweh.

What a wonderful example. We often pray for things; do we remember to *thank* God in return when the prayer has been answered? Thanksgiving is a gracious act of recognition of benefits received. What is the normal reaction to circumstances when a generous, warmhearted deed that has been unselfishly done for another is taken for granted, or is received coldly, or with indifference? Is it not one of hurt? Is it not a divine command that we "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you?" (1 Thess. 5:18). Let us be warm in expressions of our thanks one to another; and above all, to God.

Consider the miracle of the ten lepers who were healed by the Lord. They appealed to Christ for help, requesting: "Master, have mercy on us." In doing so they acknowledged his power to cure them, and testified to their faith in him. Moreover, they acted in faith, for when the Lord instructed them to "Go shew yourselves unto the priests," they instantly obeyed, although at that point they had not been cured. The narrative states that, "as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:13-14).

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Those lepers recognised their need of Christ; they manifested faith in him; and were obedient to his command. So far they had done well. But one thing was lacking, and that was manifested by the action of one of them who was a Samaritan. When he saw that he was healed, he turned back, "and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at the feet of the Lord, giving him thanks" (Vv. 15,16).

His action pleased the Lord. Christ had been waiting for some such act of gratitude; some voice of thanksgiving. "Were there not ten cleansed?" he enquired. "But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

This surely teaches that that which is due to God is not complete by the manifestation of belief, faith and obedience. One final gesture is required: acknowledgment of benefits received in thanksgiving. Turning to the leper who had returned for that purpose, the Lord declared: "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (v. 19). The word *sozo* rendered *whole* signifies *to save*, and that, not merely from disease, but spiritually (Acts 2:47; 16:31). The nine had been cleansed, the one had been promised salvation. What a lesson!

Let us appreciate to the full the great benefits that God has granted us, both spiritually and materially, and let us express our thanks to Him with warm feeling. Remember the action of Hannah who wanted to do something for Yahweh to show her thanks; or that of the leper, who in excess of gratitude prostrated himself at the feet of the Lord to express his deep appreciation of God's goodness. Our prayers will become more powerful if we recall what God has done for us, and thank Him accordingly.

Hezekiah's Preparation For Prayer

A certain amount of mental preparation is necessary for prayer. We need to think out for what we will pray. Particularly is that the case in times of crisis. Such moments come to every life, and sometimes at the most unexpected moment.

Consider the example of Hezekiah at such a time. Jerusalem was threatened by Rabshakeh at the head of the victorious Assyrian army, noted for its ruthless brutality. Within the city, counsels were divided. Some urged upon Hezekiah to seek the help of Egypt; others suggested capitulating to Assyria; a section of the community, in the madness of despair, gave themselves over to debauchery and licence, saying "let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." They had not faith in Yahweh, Hezekiah or themselves.

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At that moment of supreme crisis, the king rose to the occasion. Undaunted by the approach of the Assyrians, unheeding of the conflicting advice of his own subjects, supported by such as Isaiah the prophet, he rested heavily upon his God. He placed the problem in the hands of Yahweh, and in faith awaited the outcome.

He did not do so lightly. He recognised how much depended upon the intervention of Yahweh, and therefore took particular pains to rightly approach Him in prayer. He carefully prepared himself for the occasion. "It came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it (the news), that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh" (Isa. 37:1).

He did three things. *Firstly* – He "rent his clothes." This revealed his deep concern; it symbolised that he was greatly concerned with the crisis, and that his feelings were open to all to see. *Secondly* – he "put on sackcloth," the garb of mourning and humiliation, witnessing to all who may care to observe, that he had humbled himself before his God. *Thirdly* – he "went into the house of Yahweh." He directly sought the help of God in prayer, thus drawing Yahweh into the arena of the controversy.

Notice also his subsequent action. He received a mocking letter from Rabshakeh, ridiculing his pitiful efforts to defend himself against the might of Assyria, and warning him against placing any trust in Yahweh to save.

Hezekiah read the letter; took it to the house of Yahweh; spread it out before God, and besought Him in prayer to answer it. "O Yahweh of Armies (the belligerent title of Deity), God of Israel (God of the threatened nation), that dwellest between the cherubim. (Who is accessible to His people); Thou alone art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth (Thou hast power to deliver)."

Thus the matter was placed into the hands of Yahweh (Isa. 37:15-20). A wonderfully encouraging response came from this prayer, and an amazing deliverance was effected.

Prayer enables us to place our problems before God, and obtain His help in time of need. Comfort and help will be received by so doing, as we can witness from our personal experience. However, in times of such crisis, let us follow the course of Hezekiah. Let us first carefully think the matter out. Perhaps we have contributed to the crisis? Perhaps our folly has caused it? Let us carefully assess the situation, and then, with garments figuratively rent, and figuratively clothed in the garb of humility, seek the forgiveness of God for our part in the matter, and place the solution of it in His hands. There is

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great consolation of mind, and strengthening of resolve in so doing.

James' Seven Forms Of Prayer

Prayer can take many forms. Several of these are referred to by James in the last chapter of his epistle. Earlier he had treated with the trials that come upon believers, and had outlined the course they should adopt under such circumstances. This climaxed in his appeal to those who suffered persecution: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord . . . Be patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7-8). James' primary reference was to the judgment about to be poured out upon guilty Judea at the hands of the Romans because of the manner in which its leaders were persecuting believers. That judgment, directed by Christ, was referred to by James as a "coming of the Lord."

In another sense, the terms of the exhortation can apply to us today. Certainly the solution is the same, for prayer can help equip us to meet the problems of these last days. James commends his readers to its power (Ch. 5:13-20), and during the course of his exposition, makes reference to seven forms of prayer.

First there is personal prayer: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray" (v. 13). *Second*, there is united prayer: "Let the elders pray" (v. 14). *Third*, there is believing prayer: "The prayer of faith shall save" (v. 15). *Fourth*, there is humble prayer: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (v. 16). *Fifth*, there is fervent prayer. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (v. 16). *Sixth*, there is earnest prayer "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (v. 17). *Seventh*, there is continued prayer: "He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain" (v. 18).

Though James' words were written upon the background of the possession of the spirit gifts, such as no longer applies today, these seven forms of prayer, nevertheless, can be given a modern application. Certainly they emphasise the importance that he placed upon prayer. They show, also, that prayer can be adapted for every occasion and for any need. Finally they suggest that prayer must not become stereotyped, but should be varied to provide for the circumstances and particular petition of the moment.

This can apply to communal and personal prayer alike. Those whose duty it is to preside over a meeting, should give thought

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to its form and purpose, so that the prayer they offer is in conformity with the objects designed.

Communal prayer will become more effective if that principle is borne in mind. A prayer offered at the commencement of the Memorial Meeting should differ from that offered at the partaking of the emblems, or at the beginning of a public address for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Careful thought should be given to the responsibility of thus leading a congregation in worship. Sincere and reverent approach should characterise both the attitude of the Presiding Brother as well as the language used in his prayers. This will help to create the right atmosphere for the members of the congregation to join with him in the expressions to which he gives utterance. They, on their part, should give deep concentration to the words used, identifying themselves with them.

Features which can be incorporated in communal prayers at Memorial Meetings include:

- (a) ascribing greatness to Yahweh;
- (b) acknowledging our dependence upon Him;
- (c) appreciation of His love and mercy to us;
- (d) recognition of our privileged position in being able to thus approach Him;
- (e) expression of His grace in providing for the failings of those who seek His face;
- (f) request for His blessing upon the meeting, the work of the Ecclesia, the welfare of brethren and sisters;
- (g) mention of any personal features such as may be brought to the notice of members by the Recorder's announcements;
- (h) communal prayer for the peace of Jerusalem;
- (i) expression of hope for the coming of the Lord and the establishment of the Kingdom.

The giving of thanks for the emblems should be limited to expression of thanks. The prayer, at such a time, should not wander into general requests, but should be short and explicit to the purpose in mind.

The concluding prayer should be short, summarising and concluding the devotions of the meeting. It is sometimes valuable to conclude with the actual words of Scripture such as are recorded in Jude 24-25; Hebrews 13:20-21.

A prayer at the commencement of a public address should be limited to seeking the Father's blessing on the proclamation of the Truth to the public. It should be brief and to the point. It should not launch into a dissertation upon the Gospel message. God does not need to be reminded that baptism is

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essential to salvation. Rather seek for the blessing and guidance of both speaker and hearer. The prayer at the conclusion of the meeting should be brief, and perhaps limited to an expression of thanks for the opportunity of thus preaching the Gospel, and the request that it might find a lodgment in the hearts of some of those present.

Prayers should be designed for the specific occasion on which they are uttered.

The Lord's Prayer

Whilst prayer should always be specific, it can be limited to an isolated petition, or it can be "complete" and all-embracing. Consider the Lord's instruction in that regard.

When the disciples approached him with the request: "Teach us to pray," he delivered unto them what has since been termed *The Lord's Prayer*. The prayer is a model of compression. It covers all necessary subjects, and yet condenses them with the greatest economy of words.

It was not given to be mechanically repeated without thought or feeling; it is not a form of words to be slavishly followed on every occasion, but it was provided as a general guideline to prayer. "After this manner, pray ye," the Lord declared. It is significant that the Apostles do not refer to it again, and as far as we know, never recited it.

But it provides excellent guidance for effective prayer. It is useful to take the various headings of it, and use them as the basis of personal approach to the Father.

First of all, the prayer can be divided into two parts. The first section concerns Yahweh; the second section concerns man. This is the proper order of things: first God; afterwards us.

It is a prayer dominated by love. It is compounded of six requests. The first three speak of our love for the Father, in that we desire the hallowing of His name; the coming of His Kingdom; the manifestation of His will in the earth. It emphasises His exalted position, and our dependent state.

Thus we pray: Our Father Who art in heaven: Petition one—Hallowed be Thy name. Petition two—Thy Kingdom come. Petition three—Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

The second three requests speak of our assurance of His love towards us. Petition one—Give us this day our daily bread (spiritual as well as material). Petition two—Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us. Petition three—Lead us not into trials, but deliver us from evil.

It concludes with a threefold statement that affirms our recognition of Yahweh's ability to grant the requests of the

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prayer: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen!"

The Lord Jesus Christ thus invited the Apostles to address Yahweh as their Father, and we have the same privilege. In doing so, we acknowledge our dependence upon Him as children, and His wisdom to grant or deny those petitions that we ask of Him.

What a wonderful privilege it is that we are invited to commune with Him in prayer. By its means we are able to bridge the illimitable distances that physically separate us from God. He is above all creation, so that we cannot fully appreciate His might, glory and power. Yet by prayer we are able to commune with Him. David gave expression to this wonderful privilege which we should strive to appreciate and use:

*"He made known His ways unto Moses,
His acts unto the children of Israel.
Yahweh is merciful and gracious;
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide;
Neither will He keep His anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a Father pitieth His children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him.
For He knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust."*

(Psalm 103:7-14).

Let us ponder the greatness of this privilege and learn to use it to the fullest extent.

Descriptive Words Of Prayer

Several different words are used for in the original Scriptures. Old Testament Hebrew words define it as a note of intreaty, or a plea for intercession or intervention, with a root meaning to *judge* or *intreat*.

In Isaiah 26:16, the word *lachash* is used signifying a *whisper*, as a *magical incantation*. "Yahweh, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer (*Lachash*) when Thy chastening was upon them." It describes the attitude of some who only turn to Yahweh in trouble, and expect the prayer they offer will act as a magic wand to rid them of it.

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The general term for prayer in the New Testament is *proseuche*, compounded of *pros*, suggesting direction *towards*, and *euche*, a *prayer*, a *vow*, or a *request*. Generally it suggests the activity of the worshipper towards Yahweh.

Another word is *deesis*, signifying to *ask* or *beg for*. It is from a root signifying to *want* or to *need*. It expresses our dependance upon God.

In John 14:16, the Lord told the disciples, "I will pray the Father." Here the word is *erotao*, and signifies to *request*. It relates to the formal presentation of a petition.

In 1 Timothy 2:1, Paul supplies four definitions of prayer in one verse: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayer, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men."

"Supplications" is *deesis* and primarily is a *wanting*, a *need*. This is the asking side of prayer. "Prayers" is *proseuche* and signifies an *approach by prayer to God*. "Intercessions" is *enteuxis*, and implies a *meeting* with God in order to converse; and then, to *make petition*. "Giving of thanks" is from *eucharistia*, and expresses gratitude manifested in thankfulness.

These are four aspects of communion. There are others. It is profitable with the help of an *Analytical Concordance* to mark in your Bible the places where the various words occur, that the full extent of the many-sided aspects of prayer may be better appreciated.

Prayer has been described as a means whereby we on earth can tune in to heaven (Heb. 10:19). It sends our thoughts to God when otherwise they would lie dormant at this end; and it opens our heart to the sympathetic reflex current from above.

Let us constantly use this means to commune with Yahweh. For prayer is properly addressed to the Father (Matt. 6:6; John 16:23; Eph. 1:17; 3:14) through the son (John 14:13). It provides the means whereby we can have communion with both, and thus draw closer in fellowship with the Father and the son (1 John 1:3).



SECTION SIX

A Scriptural Analysis of Prayer

When the Apostles approached the Lord and said, "Teach us how to pray," they gave expression to feelings that must have dominated many believers since. So many feel frustrated in prayer. They seem to derive no benefit from it. Of course, prayer means more than merely closing the eyes in reverence, and uttering words devoid of concrete meaning. Certainly more is required than that. Indeed, it is possible to be blind to the requirements of prayer. Consider the two parables that the Lord spoke concerning prayer, recorded in Luke 18. The first is the parable of the importunate widow whose much pleading of the unjust judge finally brought results; the second in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in the Temple praying.

The first parable teaches that we should never give up praying; the second parable demonstrates that we must learn to pray aright.

The Pharisee was a hypocrite; yet he was blind to the fact. He searched his heart, and found only good. He stood upright

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in confidence and self-justification. He stood apart in pride, and in consciousness of his supposed superiority.

The publican was a worldling. He searched his heart and found only evil therein. He stood with head bowed recognising the fact. He stood apart like the Pharisee, but it was in shame. He realised his need of God, and in doing so, came to acknowledge the first essential of acceptable worship, which is a realisation of his need of God.

Notice the egotism of the Pharisee: his use of the pronoun "I" (Luke 18:11-12); the eloquence of his claims of self-righteousness; the pompousness of his thanks to God: "That I am not as other men are"

Contrast the humility of the publican; his inability to express himself. There is no oratory in his appeal. He thinks of his failures and in grief smites his breast; he thinks of the holiness of God, and cannot lift his eyes to heaven; there is much that he would like to say, but all that he can stumble out with is, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

That was the full extent of his prayer, but it pleased God more than the eloquence of the Pharisee. Yet, obviously, the publican was laden with sins. It was a realisation of his weakness and misery that caused him to seek God's mercy. But though a sinner, he was not guilty of the worst of common sins: the sin of pride. The Pharisee had a surfeit of that, but was blind to the fact. He imagined that his prayers were pleasing unto God, but they were not. His eloquence and oratory were but expressions of his pride and arrogance, and of no use to God, Whose ears are closed to such.

In the parable, one prayer was powerful, and one was not. It is not difficult for the simplest of minds to learn the lesson and to apply the principles expressed.

Let us consider what the Bible says regarding prayer. We will set out Scripture references with but the briefest comment, to permit the reader to meditate upon them, and allow them to guide his approaches to the Father.

*When Prayer
Is Powerless*

W*hen It Is Inconsistent With Action:* "Pray not thou for this people, neither make intercession to Me; for I will not hear thee. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?" (Jer. 7:16-17).

When Unforgiveable Sin Is Committed: "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16).

When Prayer Lacks Sincerity And Faith: "When thou prayest

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thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matt. 6:5).

When Prayer Is Substituted For Action: "And Yahweh said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward . . ." (Exod. 14:15). "And Yahweh said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant . . . therefore they could not stand before their enemies . . . neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Josh. 7:7-13).

When Prayer Is Governed By Self: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3).

When Prayer Is Framed To Change Yahweh's Decrees: "And I besought Yahweh at that time, saying, O Lord Yahweh, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might? I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But Yahweh was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me . . ." (Deut. 3:23-27).

When Prayer Is Dictated By Impure Motives: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, Yahweh will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18).

When Prayer Is Designed To Avoid Necessary Discipline: "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth . . . and it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child had died . . ." (2 Sam. 12:16-18). "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, . . . for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness . . ." (2 Cor. 12:7).

When Sin Is Not Recognised: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

When Prayer Is A Mere Repetition of Empty Phrases: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not yet therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matt. 6:7-8).

When Prayer Is Offered In Arrogance: "Pride, and arrogance,

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and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov. 8:13).

Remember, Prayer Can Be An Abomination! "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

Advice On Prayer

Make your words brief: "Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7).

"Present your petitions in humility: "The Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:13).

"Be specific and pointed in your requests: "Do not be over anxious; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

Be reverential in your approach: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecc. 5:2). "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa. 40:25).

Make your prayers personal, in complete awareness of God, as though He were present: "She called the name of Yahweh that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13). "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me (i.e. as though in My presence) and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1).

Learn to feel the Prayers you utter: "If thou shalt seek Yahweh thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29).

Conditions Of Being Heard

Yahweh is far from the wicked; but He heareth the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29).

"Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark. 11:25).

"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).

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"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12).

"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22).

"This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

Hopes Of Being Heard

But know that Yahweh hath set apart Him that is godly for Himself: Yahweh will hear when I call unto Him (Ps. 4:3).

"Yahweh, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear" (Ps. 10:17).

"I have called upon Thee; for Thou wilt hear me, O God; incline Thine ear unto me, and hear my speech" (Ps. 17:6).

"I will call on Yahweh, Who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (2 Sam. 22:4).

"In Thee, O Yahweh, do I hope: Thou wilt hear, O Yahweh my God" (Ps. 38:15).

"When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me" (Ps. 56:9).

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Ps. 65:2).

"But as for me, my prayer is unto Thee, O Yahweh, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation" (Ps. 69:13).

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in Yahweh God, that I may declare all Thy works" (Ps. 73:28).

"In the day of trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me" (Ps. 86:7).

"He will not regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Ps. 102:17).

Prayer Heard In Trouble

In my distress I called upon Yahweh, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears" (Ps. 18:6).

"I called upon Yahweh in distress: Yahweh answered me, and set me in a large place" (Ps. 118:5).

"In my distress I cried unto Yahweh, and He heard me" (Ps. 120:1).

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"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters . . . so our eyes wait upon Yahweh our God, until that He have mercy upon us" (Ps. 123:1-2).

"I poured out my complaint before Him; I shewed before Him my trouble" (Ps. 142:2).

"I set my face unto Yahweh God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan. 9:3).

"When my soul fainted within me I remembered Yahweh; and my prayer came in unto Thee into Thine holy temple" (Jonah 2:7).

"Yahweh hath heard my supplication; Yahweh will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:9).

"Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah" (Ps. 21:2).

"They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded" (Ps. 22:5).

"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes; nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto Thee" (Ps. 31:22).

"The eyes of Yahweh are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Ps. 34:15).

"I waited patiently for Yahweh; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1).

Learn to express your dependence on Him: "For Yahweh heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners (Ps. 69:33). "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Ps. 102:17). "Yahweh will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Yahweh, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Ps. 9:9-10).

Make a habit of private Prayer: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Prepare your mind for Prayer: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

**Exhortation
To Pray**

Seek Yahweh and His strength, seek His face continually (1 Chron. 16:11; Ps. 105: 4).

"Seek Ye Yahweh while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. 55:6).

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"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. 3:41).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

"I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

Promises To Hear Prayer

But if from thence thou shalt seek Yahweh thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29).

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

"For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely, in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him" (Ps. 32:6).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. 50:15).

"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Ps. 145:19).

"He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee" (Isa. 30:19).

"Call upon Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee **great** and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3).

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Beneficial Effects Of Prayer

And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Ps. 9:10).

"Yahweh is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Ps. 145:18).

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6).

"Yahweh is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3:25).

"Seek Yahweh and ye shall live" (Amos 5:4,6).

Public Prayers Heard

And Jehoahaz besought Yahweh, and Yahweh hearkened unto him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them" (2 Kings 13:4).

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"Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Yahweh God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard" (2 Kings 19:20).

"Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even unto heaven" (2 Chron. 30:27).

"And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Yahweh God, forgive, I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. Yahweh repented for this: It shall not be, saith Yahweh" (Amos 7:2-3).

"And in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies, Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies" (Neh. 9:27-28).

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17-18).

Prayers Not Heard

And ye returned, and wept before Yahweh; but Yahweh would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you" (Deut. 1:45).

"They looked, but there was none to save; even unto Yahweh, but He answered them not" (2 Sam. 22:42; Ps. 18:41).

"Therefore, thus saith Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto Me, I will not hearken unto them" (Jer. 11:11; See Jer. 15:1).

"They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek Yahweh; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them" (Hos. 5:6).

Complaints Of Not Being Heard

I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and Thou regardest me not" (Job 30:20).

"O God, why hast Thou cast us off for ever? why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture?" (Ps. 74:1).

"O Yahweh God of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?" (Ps. 80:4).

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"How long, Yahweh? wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever? shall Thy wrath burn like fire?" (Ps. 89:46).

"Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out My prayer" (Lam. 3:8).

"Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through" (Lam. 3:44).

"O Yahweh, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!" (Hab. 1:2).

*Why Prayer Is
Not Heard*

I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan
But Yahweh was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and Yahweh said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter (Deut. 3:25-26).

"Ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more" (Judges 10:11-13).

"There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men" (Job 35:12).

"Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it" (Job 25:13).

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, Yahweh will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18).

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me" (Prov. 1:24-28).

"And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15).

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

"Then shall they cry unto Yahweh, but He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings" (Micah 3:4).

"Therefore it is come to pass, that, as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith Yahweh of hosts" (Zech. 7:13).

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"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him he heareth" (John 9:31).

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3).

*Prayer
Omitted*

Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God" (Job 15:4).

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Ps. 10:4).

"Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up My people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God" (Ps. 53:4).

"But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel" (Isa. 43:22).

*At What Times
To Pray*

My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning O Yahweh; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up (Ps. 5:3).

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17).

"I cry unto thee daily" (Ps. 86:3).

"I have cried day and night before Thee" (Ps. 88:1).

"Unto Thee have I cried, O Yahweh; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent me" (Ps. 11:13).

"At mid-night Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

*Where To
Pray*

From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I (Ps. 61:2).

"I called upon Thy name, O Yahweh, out of the low dungeon" (Lam. 3:55).

"Then Jonah prayed unto Yahweh his God, out of the fish's belly" (Jonah 2:1).

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Avoid Affectation

When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him (Matt. 6:5-8).

"They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against Me" (Hos. 7:14).

"Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater damnation" (Mark 12:40).

"Teach us what we shall say unto Him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness" (Job 37:19).

"Take with you words, and turn to Yahweh; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips" (Heb. 14:2).

Gestures In Prayer

K*neeling:*

"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Yahweh our Maker" (Ps. 95:6).

"When Solomon had made an end of praying . . . he arose from before the altar of Yahweh, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven" (1 Kings 8:54).

Bowing:

"And I bowed down my head, and worshipped" (Gen. 24:48).

"Moses made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped" (Exod. 34:8).

". . . And David said to all the congregation, Now bless Yahweh your God. And all the congregation blessed Yahweh God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped" (1 Chron. 29:20).

"And when they had made an end of offering, the king, and all that were present with him, bowed themselves, and worshipped" (2 Chron. 29:29).

Prostrate:

"And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him" (Gen. 17:3).

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"And Yahweh said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" (Josh. 7:10).

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before Yahweh, worshipping Yahweh" (2 Chron. 20:18).

"Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping, and casting himself down before the house of God" (Ezra 10:1).

Standing:

"And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door" (Exod. 33:10).

"And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel; and all the congregation of Israel stood" (1 Kings 8:14).

"And Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven" (1 Kings 8:22).

"And all the congregation of Israel stood" (2 Chron. 6:3).

Sitting:

"And David the king came and sat before Yahweh, and said, Who am I, O Yahweh God, and what is mine house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (1 Chron. 17:16).

Specific Requests Made In Prayer

Request to be heard:

Ret have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Yahweh my God, to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before Thee today" (1 Kings 8:28). Other similar requests: Ps. 5:1-2; 28:1-2; 54:2; 55:1; 84:8; 119:149; 143:1.

For mercy in general:

"Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer" (Ps. 4:1).

"Have mercy also upon me, and answer me" (Ps. 27:7).

"Shew us Thy mercy, O Yahweh, and grant us Thy salvation" (Ps. 85:7).

"Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me, may see it, and be ashamed; because Thou, Yahweh, hast holpen me, and comforted me" (Ps. 86:17).

See also Ps. 119:58,76,77; Hab. 3:2.

For the pardon of sin:

"Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness sake, O Yahweh For Thy name's sake, O Yahweh, pardon

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mine iniquity; for it is great . . . Look upon mine affliction, and my pain; and forgive all my sins" (Ps. 25:7,11,18).

"Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish" (Ps. 39:8).

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions . . . Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow . . . Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice . . . Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities . . . Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness" (Ps. 51:1,2,7,8,9,14).

For Divine Help:

"Be not Thou far from me, O Yahweh; O my Strength, haste Thee to help me" (Ps. 22:19).

"Hear, O Yahweh, and have mercy upon me: Yahweh, be Thou my helper" (Ps. 30:10). See also Ps. 38:21-22; 71:12; 119:173.

For Speedy Deliverance:

"Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be Thou my strong Rock, for an house of defence to save me" (Ps. 31:2).

"I am poor and needy; yet Yahweh thinketh upon me. Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God" (Ps. 40:17).

See also: Ps. 44:23; 70:5; 102:2; 141:1.

For Divine Examination:

"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin" (Job 13:23).

"Examine me, O Yahweh, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Ps. 26:2).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

For Divine Illumination:

"I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people" (Exod. 33:13).

"Lead me, O Yahweh, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make Thy way straight before my face" (Ps. 5:8).

"Shew me Thy ways, O Yahweh; teach me Thy paths. Lead

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me in Thy truth, and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day" (Ps. 25:4-5).

"Teach me Thy way, O Yahweh, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies" (Ps. 27:11).

"I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me: teach me Thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts; so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works" (Ps. 119:26-27, 33,34,64,66,68,73,108,124,125).

"Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art My God; Thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness" (Ps. 142:10).

For Sanctifying Grace:

"Cleanse Thou me from secret faults; keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let not them have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Ps. 19:12-13).

"O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee" (Ps. 25:20-21).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee" (Ps. 51:10-13).

"Teach me Thy way, O Yahweh; I will walk in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Ps. 86:11).

"O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes" (Ps. 119:5).

"Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way Quicken me in Thy righteousness Let my heart be found in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed Order my steps in Thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Ps. 119:35,36,37,40,133).

"Set a watch, O Yahweh, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

For Spiritual Stability:

"Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. 17:5).

"Let Thy loving kindness and Thy truth continually preserve me" (Ps. 40:11).

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"Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us" (Ps. 68:28).

"Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort" (Ps. 71:3).

"Stablish Thy word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear" (Ps. 119:38).

"Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually" (Ps. 119:117).

"Grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word" (Acts 4:29).

"Yahweh, make me to know mine end, and the measure of thy days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" (Ps. 39:4).

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

For Manifestation of Divine Goodness:

"Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake" (Ps. 31:16).

"Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (Ps. 80:3,19).

"Rejoice the soul of Thy servant; for unto Thee, O Yahweh, do I lift up my soul" (Ps. 86:4).

For Prosperity in Affairs:

"And he said, O Yahweh God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12).

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (1 Chron. 4:10).

"Let the beauty of Yahweh our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (Ps. 90:17).

"Save now, I beseech Thee, O Yahweh; O Yahweh, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity" (Ps. 118:25).

"O Yahweh, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name; and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man; for I was the king's cupbearer" (Neh. 1:11).

In Time of Affliction:

"I am weary with my groaning; all night make I my bed to

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swim; I water my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6:6).

"Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help" (Ps. 22:11).

"Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O bring Thou me out of my distresses" (Ps. 25:16-17).

"Have mercy upon me, O Yahweh, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly" (Ps. 31:9).

"Yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Ps. 57:1).

"Quicken me, O Yahweh, for Thy name's sake: for Thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble" (Ps. 143:11).

See also Ps. 69:17; Ps. 88:14-16; Ps. 119:25,28,107,153.

In Imminent Danger:

"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters (Ps. 69:1, 2,14,15).

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Yahweh. Yahweh, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications (Ps. 130:1-2).

"Send Thine hand from above, rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children" (Ps. 144:7).

For Others:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplications for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

"I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

For co-labourers:

"Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19. See also Rom. 15:30-32; 2 Cor. 1:11).

"Praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Col. 4:3).

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“Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3:1-2; see 1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18).

That Others May Be Heard:

“Hearken, therefore unto the supplications of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place; hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when Thou hearest, forgive” (2 Chron. 6:21).

“I beseech Thee, O Yahweh God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandment; let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servant” (Neh. 1:5-6).

For Communal Forgiveness:

“If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Yahweh, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff-necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance” (Exod. 34:9).

“I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great according as Thou hast spoken, saying, Yahweh is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num. 14:17-19).

“O remember not against us former iniquities; let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name’s sake” (Ps. 79:8-9).

“Forgive Thy people that have sinned against Thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against Thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them (1 Kings 8:50).

For Israel:

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love Thee” (Ps. 122:6).

“Ye that make mention of Yahweh, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:6-7).

“O Yahweh, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech

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Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and His supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name" (Dan. 9:16-18).

For Children:

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee" (Gen. 17:18).

"David, therefore, besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth" (2 Sam. 12:16).

"Give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for the which I have made provision" (1 Chron. 29:19).

"Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children" (Ps. 90:16).

For Saints in General:

"O continue Thy loving kindness unto them that know Thee: and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart" (Ps. 36:10).

"Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Yahweh be magnified" (Ps. 40:16).

"Do good, O Yahweh, unto those that be good, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always, in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3-5).

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9).

"Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your

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face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.. Now God Himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you" (1 Thess. 3:10-12).

"Wherefore also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure, of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:11-12).

For Individuals:

"And Moses cried unto Yahweh, saying, Heal her (Miriam) now, O God, I beseech Thee" (Num. 12:13).

"So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went, and did according as Yahweh commanded them: Yahweh also accepted Job. And Yahweh turned the captivity of Job, when He prayed for his friends; also Yahweh gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job. 42:9-10).

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (2 Tim. 1:3-4).

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers" (Philemon 4).

For the Public:

"And seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto Yahweh for it: for, in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer. 29:7).

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

In Time of Calamity:

"Thou hast showed Thy people hard things; Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man" (Ps. 60:3,11).

"Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause; remember how the foolish man reproacheth Thee daily. Forget not the voice of Thine enemies; the tumult of those that rise up against Thee increaseth continually" (Ps. 74:22-24).

"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? Let Him be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging

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of the blood of Thy servants which is shed, and render unto our neighbours seven-fold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Yahweh" (Ps. 79:10,12).

For The Divine Blessing:

"On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them: Yahweh bless thee, and keep thee; Yahweh make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; Yahweh lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" (Num. 6:23-27).

For Peace:

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13).

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen" (Rom. 15:33).

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5).

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all" (2 Thess. 3:16).

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

"But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. 5:10).

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Phil. 3).



SECTION SEVEN

Prayer in Time of Crisis

In times of crisis, there is ineffable comfort in the invitation of Scripture to "Cast thy burden upon Yahweh, and He will sustain thee" (Ps. 55:22). But can we always rely upon Him doing so? The experience of life demonstrates that we can, though faith is often necessary in order to appreciate the fact.

For we might continue to pray, without receiving immediate relief such as we desire from the problems that press so heavily upon us, or the bitter opposition that threatens to crush us.

Is that an indication that Yahweh is indifferent to our prayers, or that prayer is not effectual? By no means. Perhaps there is some lesson that He is trying to teach us or others; perhaps we are obstinately resistant to His guidance; perhaps the time is not ripe to grant the request that we make. Whatever the reason, Yahweh is not indifferent to our state, nor unmindful of our prayers, but is seeking some greater result in our lives which the very suffering we are enduring can assist to bring about.

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How frequently, do we find, when we have gone through such an experience, and have objectively reviewed it in the light of the final results, that the love and goodness of Yahweh have been revealed through the trouble He has strengthened us to endure, rather than the period of ease and enjoyment we sometimes have. When we do that, we learn to accept trouble as the disciplinary hand of Yahweh for our benefit, and begin to see a valuable purpose in it. The Apostle wrote: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down . . ." (Heb. 12:11-12).

Men and women of faith, whose lives are recorded in the Word, sometimes had to wait many long and weary years before light broke in upon their darkness. Yet, as we consider their lives, we recognise the benefit of such trials (James 1:12). We perceive how that their characters were purified thereby, and an example of faithful endurance was given to others. The case of Job is a case in point.

Consider the prayers of such, as recorded in the Word.

Complaint Against Enemies

The opposition of unscrupulous enemies is made a matter of prayer.

"Yahweh how are they increased that trouble me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah"

(Psalm 3:1-2).

"Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies" (Ps. 6:7).

"Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O Thou Most High" (Ps. 56:1-2).

"They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul" (Ps. 56:6).

"For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Yahweh. They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold" (Ps. 59:3-4).

"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully are mighty; then I restored that which I took not away" (Ps. 69:4).

"O God, the proud are risen against me, and have not set Thee before them" (Ps. 86:14).

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"Mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied" (Ps. 38:19).

"Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate" (Ps. 143:4).

*Yahweh's
Attention
Requested*

Yahweh is specifically requested to involve Himself in the problems that oppress His servants:

"How long wilt Thou forget me, O Yahweh! for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Ps. 13:1-2).

"This Thou hast seen, O Yahweh; keep not silence: O Yahweh be not far from me. Stir up Thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord" (Ps. 35:22-23).

"Hold not Thy peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue" (Ps. 109:1-2).

"Give heed to me, O Yahweh, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me" (Jer. 18:19).

"Yahweh, bow down Thine ear, and hear; open, Yahweh, Thine eyes, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God" (2 Kings 19:16).

"My God, think Thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear" (Neh. 6:14).

*Deliverance
Sought From
Enemies*

Faithful men have prayed that Yahweh might help them against those who have arisen against them; seeking His defence and protection in time of trouble.

"Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about Arise, O Yahweh, disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Thy sword" (Ps. 17:8,9,13).

"Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me" (Ps. 36:11).

"Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked: from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity" (Ps. 64:1-2).

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"Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I" (Ps. 142:6).

"Deliver me, O Yahweh, from mine enemies: I fly unto Thee to hide me" (Ps. 143:9).

"For I said, Hear me; lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me" (Ps. 38:16).

*For The
Confusion Of
The Wicked*

Some prayers contained in the *Book of Psalms* so breathe forth the spirit of revenge, and call for vengeance in such terms of imprecation as to offend the feelings of those governed by the principles of Christ's teaching.

For example, the prayer contained in Psalm 35:26: "Let them be ashamed, and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at my hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me." Or: "Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into Thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" (Ps. 69:27-28).

Are we to imitate the implacable hatred that these prayers seem to exhibit?

A careful consideration of the background of these Psalms, or the significance of such prayers, will reveal that they were uttered by men who were key personalities in the development of Yahweh's purpose in the earth. Some were the prayers of prophets who realised that the triumph of wickedness must be at the expense of Yahweh's purpose in the earth and prayed for the overthrow of those who were so steeped in evil that there was no hope of reclamation. Some were the words of David, and included Messianic Psalms, prophetically expressing the prayers of the Lord Jesus.

Such imprecatory expressions plead for the triumph of righteousness and truth over wickedness and error, realistically recognising that this demands the overthrow of evil men. When the Psalmist prayed that his enemies might be "brought to confusion together," it was not out of personal vindictiveness, but because he realised that those against whom he spoke were so given over to wickedness that no other course was possible if righteousness were to prevail. His prayer that they should be overthrown, was really a request that the Divine purpose might speedily be established in the earth. "Ye that love Yahweh hate evil," declared the Psalmist (Ps. 97:10). In similar vein, the Lord Jesus commended the Ephesian Ecclesia because it

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"could not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:2), declaring that he, too, "hated" the deeds of the Nicolaitanes (v. 6).

If righteousness is to prevail in the earth, those who are identified with wickedness must be revealed for what they are, and their deeds so judged that others might see that there is no future in following their course of action. David was so earnestly embued with the goodness of Yahweh that he could not bear those who blasphemed His holy name:

*"Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God;
Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
For they speak against Thee wickedly,
And Thine enemies take Thy name in vain.
Do not I hate them, O Yahweh, that hate Thee?
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies"*

(Psalm 139:19-22).

Notice how that David discriminated between those whom he described as Yahweh's enemies; and those who were his personal enemies. There was mercy and forgiveness for the latter. He did not exact vengeance on Saul when it was in his power to do so; and he refused his followers to punish Shimei when the latter publicly denounced him and cursed him.

Divine love is not a boundless toleration of evil, but a very jealous regard of Yahweh's honour. The love that Christ had for his Father, and which we, too, should reflect, will not stand silently by when His name is maligned (Ps. 15:4; 31:6). When we pray, "*Hallowed be Thy name*" we are praying for a state that will only be brought about by divine judgment in the earth: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9).

When the Psalmist declared: "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt" (Ps. 71:13), he did so legitimately, because he personified truth and righteousness, whilst his enemies were identified with error and wickedness. Truth and error, righteousness and wickedness, cannot for ever live side by side, any more than light and darkness can exist simultaneously. As the Psalmist identified himself with the things of Yahweh, he prayed for their vindication in the only way possible: the overthrow of those who stubbornly refused to be brought under the influence of such, and, in consequence were not only enemies of Yahweh, but enemies also of the Psalmist.

It might be thought that it would be more consistent with mercy and goodness for him to pray for their conversion, but

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the time for that was past, and if truth were to prevail those who had openly and stubbornly identified themselves with spiritual darkness and wickedness had to be put down. The Psalmist prayed that Yahweh arise to vindicate Himself in that way for it was the only way possible, and the overthrow of such wicked perverters of truth would preserve others from their influence. The death of Judas is a case in point (see (Acts 1:20).

But that which is quite right from the lips of especially appointed and endowed men, such as David, Yahweh's anointed, or the prophets of Israel, is not always so from lesser men. Such requests were made on the grounds that Yahweh knows the motives of all His creatures, and, therefore, is in the position of judging righteously. Thus:

"But, O Yahweh of hosts, Who judgest righteously, Who triest the reins and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them: for unto Thee have I revealed my cause" (Jer. 11:20). "O Yahweh, Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in Thy longsuffering: know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke" (Jer. 15:15).

These two prayers called upon Yahweh to vindicate His purpose and His servants. Jeremiah desired this to be done quickly, for it would bring to an end his strivings with the false prophets, and would deliver others from their evil influence. Do not we want to see Yahweh's vengeance upon the world of wickedness and darkness manifest today? Are not we anxious for the glorious light of Christ's Kingdom to drive away the evils of this Gentile night of evil and blasphemy? Are not we depressed by the triumph of wickedness in the earth? Then pray for the coming of Christ, and the vindication of Yahweh's name in the earth. Re-echo the prayer of Joel: "Thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Yahweh" (Joel 3:11).

So with Jeremiah's prayer for personal vindication. He had so identified himself with Yahweh's truth that the silence of Yahweh at the wickedness of his opponents, was looked upon as justification of the things for which they stood. The prophet prayed that it be otherwise. He had a deep love for Israel, and for those who were its true sons and daughters; and he refused to compromise its principles with its pseudo-sons. He vigorously opposed the false prophets who would destroy the people and bring to destruction the nation. He saw the issues clearly, and prayed that Yahweh would revenge him of his persecutors, for only in such would the triumph of righteousness come.

Nehemiah prayed similarly: "Hear, O our God; for we are

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despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of their captivity" (Neh. 4:4).

Paul has a like comment in 2 Timothy 4:14: "Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works."

Let us pray for the forgiveness of those who oppose us through misunderstanding or even enmity, but it is not our prerogative to forgive those who so sin against God. Those who are the subject of these imprecatory prayers, were not so much the enemies of those who uttered them, as they were the enemies of Yahweh. We can forgive those who "despitefully use us," but we are in no position to forgive those who boldly and stubbornly set themselves up against Yahweh and His truth, and endeavour to influence others along a like course.

Moreover, when we are in the position of having stubbornly done wrong, let us acknowledge it and make restitution. In that regard, there are examples in the Word of self-imprecatory prayers. Consider the following:

"And David spake unto Yahweh, when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24:17).

In fact, the people of Israel against whom Yahweh's wrath had been turned, had sinned very grievously against Him, for they had sided with Absalom in his rebellion against his father, and therefore had assisted in driving Yahweh's Anointed (His Christ) from the throne in Israel. Their action was tantamount to those who would reject Christ today.

On another occasion, in pleading his cause against "Cush the Benjamite," David gave way to a self-imprecatory Psalm. "O Yahweh my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy); let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah" (Ps. 7:3-5).

Confession In Times Of Sin

We constantly fall short of the glory of God, and, therefore, are daily in need of His merciful forgiveness. But in addition to what we might call these "little sins," we sometimes are brought under the shadow of worse sins. Prayer can cleanse us of these, and we need to open them up to God that He might cover them up. That was the lesson that David learned in connection with his great sin. He

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discovered that the only way to blot it out was to open it up to Yahweh. He found great humility and happiness in the forgiveness that was extended to him, causing him to write: "Blessed (happy) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). Consider the following expressions of humility and confession of sins included in prayers to the Father:

"And Abraham said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto Yahweh, which am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27).

"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4-5).

"And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech Thee, do away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (1 Chron. 21:8).

"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Yahweh; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found" (Ps. 32:5-6).

"For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin" (Ps. 38:18).

"I said, O Yahweh, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against Thee" (Ps. 41:4).

"For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Ps. 51:3-4).

"If Thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquities, O Yahweh, who shall stand? (Ps. 130:3).

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me" (Ps. 40:12).

"O Yahweh, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee" (Jer. 14:7).

"O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6).

"Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept Thy law, nor hearkened unto Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, wherewith Thou didst testify against them" (Neh. 9:33-34).



SECTION EIGHT

Pleadings and Praises in Prayer

The prayers of faithful men recorded in Scripture, record them as pleading with Yahweh on the basis of His covenant promises, or the attributes of His character as set forth in His revelation.

Pleading God's Promises

Through the revelation of His word, Yahweh has made promises unto all His servants, and it is legitimate for them to plead His help on the basis of these. Hence:

“And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (Gen. 32:12).

“Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope” (Ps. 119:49).

“Let my cry come near before Thee, O Yahweh: give me understanding according to Thy word. Let my supplication come before Thee; deliver me according to Thy word” (Ps. 119:169-170).

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"Now, therefore, O Yahweh God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father, that which Thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in My sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way, to walk in My law, as thou hast walked before Me. Now, then, O Yahweh God of Israel, let Thy word be verified, which Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant David" (2 Chron. 6:16-17).

"Do not abhor us, for Thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory: remember, break not Thy covenant with us" (Jer. 14:21).

"Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them . . . I will gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there" (Neh. 1:8-9).

"Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, Who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that hath come upon us" (Neh. 9:32).

Pleading God's Goodness

The attributes of Yahweh's character, set forth in Exodus 34:6-7, formed the basis of the pleading of men of faith. "Remember, O Yahweh, Thy tender mercies, and Thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old" (Ps. 25:6).

"But do Thou for me, O Yahweh the Lord, for Thy name's sake; because Thy mercy is good, deliver Thou me" (Ps. 109:21).

"Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?" (Isa. 63:15).

"Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for Yahweh's sake" (Dan. 9:17).

Pleading Yahweh's Justice

Justice was appealed to as a basis of prayer. "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. 18:23-25).

"Hear the right, O Yahweh, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. Let my

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sentence come forth from Thy presence; let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal" (Ps. 17:1-2).

"Help, Yahweh; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Ps. 21:1).

"Wherefore they cried unto Yahweh, and said, We beseech Thee, O Yahweh, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for Thou, O Yahweh, hast done as it pleased thee" (Jonah 1:14).

*Pleading On
The Ground Of
Good Performed* Sometimes faithful men reminded Yahweh of their endeavours to do what He would approve, and on the basis of such attempts besought His help in need.

"Judge me, O Yahweh; for I have walked in mine integrity; I have trusted also in Yahweh; therefore I shall not slide" (Ps. 26:1).

"Preserve my soul, for I am holy; O Thou, my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee" (Ps. 86:2).

"I have chosen the way of truth; Thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Yahweh, put me not to shame" (Ps. 119:30-31).

"I beseech Thee, O Yahweh, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore" (2 Kings 20:3).

"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:19).

"Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (Neh. 13:14).

*Prayer As A
Medium Of
Praise* Prayer should be a medium of praise unto Yahweh. "Hallowed be Thy name," is the first petition in the Lord's prayer, whilst constant exhortations to praise are found throughout the Word (cp. 1 Chron. 16:8,9, 23,24,28,29; Ps. 9:11). The Psalmist exhorts us to "give unto Yahweh the glory due unto His name; worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:1-2). Again: "Sing forth the honour of His name; make His praise glorious" (Ps. 66:2).

We are to praise Him because of His protective care (Ps. 5:11); because it is right for the upright to do so (Ps. 33:1); because it glorifies Him who should be glorified (Ps. 50:23); because of His loving kindness (Ps. 63:3); because of His righteous judgments (Ps. 67:3); because of His righteousness (Ps. 71:15); because of His faithfulness (Ps. 89:1-2).

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We are also exhorted to join with others in such expressions of praise (Ps. 34:3; 95:1-2; 107:21). Such praise is to be wholehearted (Ps. 9:1), joyful (Ps. 9:2), confident (Ps. 34:2), based on the word (Ps. 56:10), and the wonder of His acts and judgments (Ps. 119:7; 145:5-6).

Expressions of praise in prayer are as follows:

"So we Thy people, and sheep of Thy pasture, will give Thee thanks for ever; we will shew forth Thy praise to all generations" (Ps. 79:13).

"One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts" (Ps. 145:4).

"I will praise Thee, O Yahweh my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify Thy name for evermore" (Ps. 86:12).

"Blessed be Yahweh God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen, Praise ye Yah" (Ps. 106:48).

"I will extol Thee, my God, O king; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever" (Ps. 145:1).

"I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation; I will praise Thee among much people" (Ps. 35:18).

"Blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. 72:19).

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46-47).

"In that day shall ye say, Praise Yahweh, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto Yahweh; for He hath done excellent things; this make known in all the earth" (Isa. 12:4-5).

"O Yahweh, Thou art my God: I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. 25:1).

"Daniel said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His; He changeth the times and the seasons, He removeth kings, and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Dan. 2:20-21).

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Dan. 4:37).

Expressions Of Praise

In the writings of the Apostles, Yahweh is praised for confirming the covenant through the Lord Jesus (Luke 1:68-70), for providing him as a means of victory (1 Cor.

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15:57), of triumph (2 Cor. 2:14), of blessing (Eph. 1:3), of fellowship (Col. 1:12), of hope (1 Pet. 1:3).

Consider the following doxologies, or expressions of praise:

“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ . . . to God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen” (Rom. 16:25,27).

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21).

“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Phil. 4:20).

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

Yahweh is praised in Scripture for prayers heard (Ps. 28:6; 66:20; 116:1-2; 118:21; Dan. 2:19-23), for daily mercies (Ps. 13:6; 35:27-28; 68:19; 103:2; 116:12-13), for special deliverances (Ps. 31:7-8; Jer. 20:13; Exod. 18:10), for public benefits towards Israel (1 Kings 8:56; Ps. 98:3; Isa. 63:7; Ezra 7:27-28), for protection (Ps. 31:21; 55:18; 18:47-49; 66:3; 98:1-2; 2 Sam. 22:40).

Expressions of exultation are found in the following prayers:

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in Yahweh; mine horn is exalted in Yahweh; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation” (1 Sam. 2:1).

“And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore, will I offer in His tabernacle, sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Yahweh” (Ps. 27:6).

Praise for Yahweh can be summed up in the following prayer:

“How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with Thee” (Ps. 139:17-18).

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*Paul's Ascription
Of Praise To
God*

As Paul considered the merciful provision of Yahweh as revealed in His plan of salvation for His family or His nation, He broke into unstinted praise of the Creator. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

The depths of wisdom and knowledge revealed in the atonement, whether considered nationally in regard to Israel, or personally, are beyond human ingenuity to search out. No one has aided Yahweh to that end. He is in debt to none. Out of Him, by means of Him, and for His glory have all these things been provided, as in Christ He has revealed Himself to that end.

As we consider His mercy and His goodness, His providential care and His greatness, and as we consider our privileged position in being drawn thereunto, we, too, can enter into the spirit of Paul's ascription of praise, and conclude it with a resounding *Amen!*



SECTION NINE

Meditations upon God and Prayer

In this section, we reproduce some meditations upon the majesty of God, and the privilege of prayer as expressed by the late A. T. Jannaway who wrote upon this theme in both *The Christadelphian* and *The Family Journal*.

MEDITATIONS ON GOD

HIS GREATNESS

How great God is! Not only has He a purpose in the earth, but He is utilizing all things to fulfil it. In this scheme He uses the bad as well as the good. No man and no thing is beyond His vision, control and employment. The Scriptures contain many illustrations of this cheering truth. Here are three: (1) A posterity to Abraham was needed to be preserved in the earth. Good Joseph and his bad brethren were laid hold of by God, and their respective aims and doings mysteriously blended and guided to accomplish the work (Gen. 37:27-28; 65:7-8). (2) The death of Christ was required for the salvation

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of man. In this, too, God employs and miraculously intertwines the righteousness of His Son with the wickedness of his contemporaries in order to bring the event to pass (Acts 2:23; Phil. 2:8). (3) The glad tidings of salvation had to be sounded by Paul in the ears of Gentiles, small and great. To accomplish it, God again providentially manipulates the love and hatred of faithful and unfaithful (Acts 9:15; 13:50; 14:6-7). We again say — How great God is! With such a God, let us be trustful — content to follow His light and leading. Events may, at times, look altogether out of their bearing. But not so to God. His glorious purpose is being worked out in the midst of it all, and this purpose requires His care for us. It is not an aimless confusion with Him. He is in touch with all things. He is everywhere at work for the good of those who commit their way in well-doing unto Him (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 4:19). What was said by God to Jacob is true of all who possess the mind of the patriarch, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" — "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

HIS LOVE

How strong is a father's love for his children! How real and deep is his concern for their happiness and well-being! How he contrives to dispel their little fears and misgivings! How willing and how eager he is to overlook their weaknesses and shortcomings! Just so is it with God and ourselves. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13). Let not the greatness and invisibility of God dull our senses to the truth and preciousness of this beautiful Scripture. Neither let us squeeze all sweetness out of it by interpreting wrongly any evil which God has suffered to enter into the experience of His beloved ones. Although many and prolonged may be our afflictions — although at times we may be unable to unravel their immediate design — we must foster faith and hope. God, as a Father, chastens us, but He has not always the cane in hand. He punishes sometimes, but only when we are exceedingly perverse. But a good Father He always is, and His blessings are infinitely more than we deserve. He tells us that His eyes are never off us, and that He is ever ready to listen to any cry of distress (1 Pet. 3:12,13; Heb. 13:6). Further, for our assurance Christ tells us that our Father knoweth what things we need before ever we ask Him (Matt. 6:8). Let us repose in Him. Let us appreciate and appropriate the comfort contained in His many promises — not merely in those which relate to the future, but in those

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also which apply to the present. Let us not anticipate evil. Let us not weep before we are hurt. Let us study the Psalms more, and try to attune our minds to the trustful, grateful, uncomplaining (though often bewildered) spirit they breathe (Psalm 16:1; 17:7; 25:2; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

HIS PROVIDENCE

The most commonplace events of our lives are under the control of God. He may often be at work for our good when we little think it or deserve it. God sometimes opens our eyes to our sins, and saves us from the consequences of them, in the most natural way. The thought is precious, and full of comfort for us, who are so weak and so erring. An illustration of God's kind providence is to be found in the incident respecting David, Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25). The case is familiar. David, on account of abominable treatment received at the hands of Nabal, a grossly selfish churl, is in a state of fury, and plans revenge. He is saved, however, from maturing his unlawful intention by the intervention of a common-sense, tactful, God-fearing woman, and is thus saved from bitter remorse and divine displeasure. But how natural was it all! Yet God was manipulating matters for the sake of upright but erring David. God permitted him to fall into sin, but delivered him from it. God "sent" Abigail — God "kept back" David from murder — God "smote" Nabal. God did it all. Yet no apparent miracle was wrought — God was not seen. The lesson to us is not far to seek. It is not that we may presume on the goodness of God to shield us from the natural effects of naughtiness, but that we may count upon His helping hand, if, in our case, a David-like disposition exists. We may be allowed to fall, but if we are of the David type (impulsive, but not wilfully rebellious) our failings will not be allowed to destroy us. How often have we, through possessing a David-like mind, been saved from powerful, deadly temptations, which, had they been yielded to, would have altered for the worse the whole trend of our lives!

HIS MERCY

Let us not allow our shortcomings to lessen our affection for God. Let them not lead us to dread rather than love Him. God has plainly said that He will overlook our deficiencies and abundantly forgive our sins, provided we confess and forsake them. Is not God "tender" and "rich" and "great"

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in mercy? Is He not "the Father of Mercies?" It is not God's will that we should run away from Him through fear. He would have us keep very near to Him, and approach Him always with boldness. Men who take an opposite attitude to this, too numerous and too great for God to overlook." This self-impeachment sounds very serious, but is our brother's feeling reliable? Is our brother in love with the Truth? Yes. Is he prepared to make sacrifices for it? Yes, many. Does he strive to overcome his failings by supplicating God's help in prayer, and reading His Word, and keeping out of temptation? Yes. Does he know that he is moving, though very, very, slowly, towards perfection? Yes. Then let our brother cheer up — let him raise the hands which hang down and strengthen the feeble knees. Let him have faith in God's mercy. There is ground for assurance and not misgiving. That a greater acquaintance with the Scriptures should lead our brother to realize more fully the wideness of the gap between Christ's perfection and his own strivings to attain it, is a good rather than a bad sign. "But," continues our brother, "is there not such a thing as presuming on the mercy of God?" There is, but our brother is not the type of man who would be guilty of this. Men who thus presume, hold the Truth in unrighteousness, seize every and any excuse for neglecting its requirements, and sin wilfully.

HIS CONDESCENSION

"Come, let us reason together," said God to unfaithful Israel. What an example for us! How much trouble we should avoid, and how much good we should do, if we always followed this example — by first courting a little heart-to-heart discussion, instead of rushing into battle with those who differ from us. A difference of opinion, even when the point of difference is grave, is not necessarily irremovable, or a sign of criminality. Some are feeble in discerning right and wrong, and some need much coaxing and argument to induce them to abandon prejudices and adopt a proper stand. It might be argued that this ought not to be, but we must remember that the brethren and sisters are not divine, either in nature, character, or intellect. Some may approach a higher standard than others, but all need to avoid high-mindedness, for to-morrow the best may fall. To convert the erring is a duty, but to start by denouncing and calling them bad names is not the way to gain their sympathy or respect. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves." Let us study to

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adopt means that are likely to secure the end which is in view. Again, when brethren show indications of repentance, they should be treated with kindness and tact, and not taunted with having changed. There are, of course, some, as in the case of the nation of Israel, who are inflexibly perverse, but before we stop our gentle and becoming pleading and reasoning — let us be quite certain that we have imitated God in His patience, forbearance, and great desire for the reclamation of the prodigals and wrong-doers.

HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE

With God nothing happens by chance. His ways are deliberate, sure, and effectual. He can foresee and prearrange events a thousand years ahead as easily as twenty-four hours. Amazing thought! Blessed truth! Human affairs steal not a march upon God — the situation of today, in all its bearings was known to Him centuries ago (Isa. 46:9,10). The power of God in this matter baffles the finite intellect of man. Man tries hard to fathom the wisdom and ability of God — especially in their bearing on the question of Free Will. How common is it for men to assert that the doctrine of the foreknowledge of God is untenable. And upon this assumption to argue the untrustworthiness of the Bible. Foreknowledge and Free Will, say they, are incompatible — a reception of the one involves a rejection of the other. Let us not be led astray by such finite reasoning. God is inscrutable, and so are many of His ways. He “doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.” The Word of God has been attested by astounding, terrifying, dumbfounding signs and wonders, in the presence of which men have been compelled to admit its truth. The verity of Bible teaching is demonstrable upon other ground than that of our being able to comprehend the “whys and wherefores” of the Deity’s operations. If a man refuse to receive the Bible till he can see how God could foretell the fidelity of Paul or Christ, without depriving them of Free Will, he will certainly have to die an unbeliever. Such an one should read Job 38 and 39, and he will realize that this is not the only work of God which he cannot fathom.

HIS FAITHFULNESS

When God has decreed a thing it is as good as done. His memory, ability, and faithfulness never falter nor fail. Because

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of this certainty the Spirit speaks of "things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). The Scriptures teem with illustrations of this interesting and upbuilding fact. The saints are said to be "free from condemnation" (Rom. 8:1) — to possess everlasting, or eternal life (John 3:36; 1 John 5:13) — whilst actually death-stricken and dying. The mighty are said to have been put down from their seats, and those of low degree exalted (Luke 1:52), whilst the former still flourish, and the latter are rejected and despised. This mode of speech is strengthening and encouraging. It helps to lift us away from the present, and to make the future very real. Our tendency is to absorb ourselves in the passing moment — to think and act as if what is will always be. God would counteract this disposition, and the method He adopts in speaking to us helps to this end. "He is faithful that promised." As surely as sorrow followed the Edenic bliss, so surely will millennial bliss follow sorrow. God foretold the one no less than the other. The only uncertain factor is as to whether we individually shall realize the bliss. This is a point left for us to settle. It may be No, but it can be Yes. It will assuredly be the latter, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm until the end." To do this is the essence of Christian excellence. To neglect this is to invite trouble. "Holding fast" means self-sacrifice now, but unspeakable blessing when the day of trying service is at an end.

HIS UNSEARCHABLENESS

"Men of science seek, in all reverence, to discover the Almighty, the Everlasting." These were the words of Professor Ray Lankester, in his presidential address, at one of the annual meetings of the British Association. The sentence has a pleasing sound, but what does it mean? What is it in relation to God that scientists wish to discover? Is it God's abode? No, they are not quite so simple as that. Is it a knowledge of His greatness? Surely not, for this is a fact obvious to the man in the street. Microscopes and telescopes and much study may make the fact more palpable, but these things are not requisite to reveal it. Is it better acquaintance with the workings of God in nature that these savants are seeking? If so, the Professor should have said so plainly. But how limited must be our knowledge of God, if we are confined to what nature can disclose! What is there in nature that can tell us of the Creator's glorious purpose with the earth and man? Of the mind which we must exhibit if we are to please Him? Of the power and efficacy of prayer? Of miracles? Upon these

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transcendently important matters the Bible alone is God's medium of revelation. And without information upon these subjects how can a man be said to know God? Ah! Nature's contribution to the knowledge of God is very limited, and only baffling and misleading when the Bible is ignored — as the statements of scientists so often and painfully show. Why do men of science turn from God's beautiful, reason-satisfying, ready-to-hand revelation, and spend their best hours in stargazing and rummaging among the dust for knowledge which they can never get there? The world by wisdom knows not God" — "His ways are past finding out" (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 11:33).

MEDITATIONS ON PRAYER

EFFECTUAL PRAYER

No man will reach the kingdom without prayer, and prayer to be effectual must proceed from lips which are sincere and upright (Ps. 145:18). God will not hear men who keep not His commandments (Prov. 15:29; Ps. 66:18). The prayers of the disobedient are worse than useless — they are an abomination in God's ears (Prov. 28:9). Let us then examine ourselves, and pray simply, fervently, unceasingly. Let us pay no heed to the objections of men who tell us that prayer is beneath the notice of a Great Creator, that it is superfluous, and, if answered, would mean a violation of Nature's laws. Till the Bible is demolished we can afford to let such objections severely alone. The Bible is full of encouragement in the matter of prayer. Hannah prayed for a child, and got one (1 Sam. 1:11,20); Abraham's servant prayed for a good wife for Isaac, and met with a favourable response (Gen. 24). Hezekiah asked for longer life, and received it (Isa. 38). Moses and David petitioned for the destruction of their enemies, and were answered. Therefore there is power in prayer. But someone may say, "I have often prayed, and obtained no reply." What of that? Has not God coupled with His promises an intimation that at times He will refrain from answering prayer. No prayer will be heeded which is opposed to His will (1 John v. 14). Can we not trust God to pick and choose for us in the things that we are to have? Much that is beyond the power of finite man to see and grasp has to be taken into account before his prayer can be answered. We sometimes forget this when things do not go just as we would wish. Let us remember, too, that this is a day for walking by faith, and that all prayer is answered in harmony with this divine arrangement.

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THE PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIP

Gentile believers (not unbelievers) possess the same worshiping privileges as did Israel in bygone days. They, as Israel should have been (Exod. 19:6), are a "royal" or "holy" priesthood. Peter, referring to the disciples of Christ, says: "Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by (or through) Jesus Christ." Our sacrifices (which embrace prayer and praise) are well pleasing to the Father through our connection with His son — a connection established by belief and baptism. The alien are not so connected. They are in the position of being "without Christ" and "without God in the world" — they are "afar off," and not "nigh," and without "access by one spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:12-19). Let us be careful not to deceive our unbelieving friends upon this point. Unsanctified man cannot have communion with God; his sins must first be covered. The teaching concerning the mediatorship of Christ leads to the same conclusion. Our Lord's ministrations are confined to his household. He is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession" — "an high priest over the house of God" (Heb. 3:1,6; 10:21). On the basis of this fact Paul enjoins us (not the world) to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). On the basis of the same fact the Scriptures remind us that all prayer (whether thanksgiving or request) is to be offered in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 13:15; John 16:23,24). No such instructions are given to those out of Christ.

AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION

God holds intercourse only with the contrite — "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2; 57:15; Ps. 34:18). Are we contrite? What is contrition? Let us not confound contrition with mere feeling — with that irrational emotion which is so common at revival meetings; or with that tearful frame of mind which is often the accompaniment of a low condition of health. Contrition, from God's point of view, is repentance, practical and intelligent — a sensible humble recognition of one's own native sinfulness and unworthiness, coupled with a careful and firm resolve to strive diligently to adjust one's ways to scriptural requirements. The opposite mind to this is to be seen in the self-satisfied, self-righteous Laodicean ecclesia; in the self-opinionated, Bible-nullifying worshippers of our times; and in the proud and haughty scorers who scruple not to sit in judgment on

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the Word of God, and give it the lie direct. Contrition is called for, not only at the epoch of our immersion; nor only when we sin outrageously; it is a life-long requisite. Little reflection on our many and varied failings should produce in us the needed disposition. If we will but face fairly the commandments of Christ, and measure ourselves by them; if we will but set before us his perfect example, and note our tremendous shortcomings, we shall quickly become contrite, and so secure the ear and favour of God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

THE NEED FOR PRAYER

Never was there a time when prayer was more called for than in these trying, perilous, closing days of the Gentiles. Prayer is one of our most precious privileges. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causeth to approach unto Thee." Its acceptability, however, is conditional. The teaching of the Spirit upon the subject is solemn and explicit. God delighteth in the prayer of the upright (Prov. 15:8), but the utterances of a sinner He abominates (Prov. 28:9; Ps. 66:18). For prayer to be efficacious it must be offered in the spirit of reverence (Lev. 10:3), sincerity (John 4:23), humility (Isa. 66:2), simplicity (Ecc. 5:1-2; Matt. 6:6-8), confidence (1 Tim. 2:8), Scripture enlightenment (Ps. 145:18), and in the name of God's exalted Son (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 8:3-4). Let us be careful — let us not forget the consequences of the vain lip service of Israel (Isa. 1:15-17; Jer. 14:12). Let us engage heartily and intelligently in prayer, not thoughtlessly and mechanically. Before we address our Father in heaven let us try to place ourselves *en rapport* with Him — let us remember that we are not only speaking to One who can hear and answer, but One who is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Prayer is not a matter to be resorted to as a kind of last chance, with the hope that it will succeed when other means have failed. Neither is it to be engaged in with a doubtful or wavering mind. Assuming that we are acceptable worshippers, let us pray, and pray unceasingly. And what greater comfort could we have in this time of weakness and perplexity than to know that we have the ear and regard of the great and good God in heaven?

WORSHIP AND THE ALIEN

God does not require the alien to seek Him before He seeks them; for them to attract His notice before He will regard.

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Where God wills His Word to go, it goes, and He does not wait to be entreated for it. He knows what his children want before they ask Him, and He knows what His to-be children want before they are in a position to ask Him. In regard to the latter, the evidence is that He will bestow good upon them unasked; in return for which He demands their obedience. God's requirements run: "Hear," "Believe," "Repent," "Be baptized," "Continue in well-going." Upon this point Dr. Thomas has well said, "God has spoken from heaven, and we must acquaint ourselves with what He has said; prayer comes afterwards." (*Christadelphian*, Vol. 6, p. 274). When the divine commands are observed (and not until) may a well-grounded scriptural confidence be entertained that God, Who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity," will take pleasure in prayer and praise. So far as the saints are concerned, God will be inquired of. Let such forsake prayer and praise, and they will soon be forsaken by God. If in this life, and in the life to come, they would receive good from above, they must "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known unto God." The standing of the unsanctified is otherwise. During the Mosaic dispensation worship was confined to those in covenant relationship with God, and it is the same under the present dispensation. The alien are called upon to first give themselves to the Lord before they engage in worship. The Scripture data upon which we can alone rightly reason, everywhere emphasizes this all-important fact.

PRAYER AND PRAISE — PRAY FOR WISDOM

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). This is definite, but let not brethren and sisters — those entitled to commune with God — lose sight of the conditions which underlie the promise. No request for wisdom will be heeded unless the one who makes it is moved by a pure motive, and goes in the direction from which wisdom alone can come. Upon the first of these points further words of James are relevant: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." In our prayers for wisdom, let us have clearly before the mind an object for wanting it which is pleasing to God, and when the blessing has been received, let us employ it in that way, and in no other. How many prayers, may be, remain unanswered, how many brethren and sisters, possibly, advance no further than babyhood in relation to the Truth, solely on account of the fact that God knew that His gift would be employed in

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unworthy ways, as a power to smite and wound unlawfully, or to "show off" to the glory of self. As to the second point, divine wisdom comes through the channel of the Scriptures, and the man who turns from these can expect no response to his prayer. God may require him to dig deep and search much, but it will not be in vain (Hos. 14:9; James 1:5; Matt. 7:7; Isa. 66:2). How God will help him to right knowledge we cannot tell, but help He will. It was not a matter of chance that Lydia, Apollos, Cornelius, and the Ethiopian eunuch, were further enlightened in the way of salvation. It is as easy for God to instruct in a providential as in a miraculous manner. Let us examine ourselves in these matters, and act the part of true and sensible beings.

THE MODEL PRAYER

"Lord, teach us to pray." What an interesting petition. How much more interesting is the answer. Do not pray, says Christ, "that ye be seen of men." This suggests that prayer has a special object. What is the object? Christ indicates it in his words: "Enter into thy closet," "the Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Thus the object of prayer is the securing the ear and favour of God. Christ did not intend to decry public prayer (his example inculcates this), but to emphasize that the only legitimate aim in prayer is the supplication of the Deity. Let us bear this well in mind. Let us not prostitute the exercise by making it a means of parading our piety, of displaying our eloquence, of giving an air of respectability to our meetings, or of imparting first-principle instruction to the alien. Christ proceeds to say, do not indulge in "vain repetitions." That is to say, we are not to repeat the same idea a dozen times. We should not think of addressing man in this way; we should know full well that it would incur displeasure. If ever there is a time for brief, unstrained, simple language, it is when speaking with God. Then Christ follows with the model prayer, and says, "After this manner pray ye." How much this prayer presents for thought. How it evinces the earnest, holy, God-loving mind we should have. "Our Father" — how near to God this brings us. "Hallowed be thy name" — an earnest request for the increase of glory to God's name. "Thy Kingdom come" — the promises, the uppermost thought in mind, and a longing for their fulfilment. And so we might continue. What hypocrites men must be to pray this prayer and continue in fellowship with the ways and aspirations of the world.

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CHILDREN AND PRAYER

Shall we teach our little ones to pray? This question, for a reason easy to explain, has troubled many a God-fearing parent. Worship according to the Scriptures, is the privilege of the saints — none else is invited by God to share in it. Such being the case, the troubled ones have asked: Is it consistent with the divine institution to instruct unbaptized children to pray? Dr. Thomas contended that, in view of the scriptural conditions which are attached to acceptable worship, children should not be asked to pray (*Herald*, Vol. 2, page 23; Vol. 9, p. 132). Brother Roberts thought it permissible for them to do so, provided the children were made to understand that they had “no spiritual relationship whatever” — that their approach to God was simply that of creatures to a Creator (*Ambassador*, Vol. 3, 184, 185; *Christadelphian*, Vol. 20, 177). When we ponder the scriptural argument of these two brethren, we have, for our own part, to confess that God has neither invited prayer from any out of Christ nor directly forbidden such approach. Let those who say they follow brother Roberts in teaching their children to pray be careful to heed the qualifications he mentions. God is not pleased with words uttered unintelligently, nor “the mere mutterings of unreasoning animals.” Prayer must ascend from minds instructed and obedient. Both the Doctor and brother Roberts counsel in harmony with God’s own arrangements in Israel, that the children should be kept near to witness our religious exercises (at the meal table and in our assemblies) but especially should they be encouraged to become true worshipping saints by learning, believing, and obeying the Truth.

IN THE AGE TO COME

“O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth” (Ps. 8:1). How profoundly significant are the Psalmist’s words. What a beautiful picture they present to the enlightened mind. They are a guarantee to us (for the Scripture cannot be broken) that God is yet to become the subject of universal thought and adoration. What a refreshing contrast to the present benighted condition of things. In that day God’s name will not be kept in the background as it is now. In every calculation He will have a place and a voice. There will be a universal effort to enhance His glory. Every law enacted, every custom instituted, every work performed, every recreation and pleasure arranged, in fact, whatever is done will be done to the glory

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of God. In that day Christ — Emmanuel — will reign, and great will be the appreciation of his work. For him shall prayer be made continually (Ps. 72:15). “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised” (Ps. 113:3). This recognition of the excellencies of Yahweh’s name will involve a kindly feeling between man and man. “Man’s inhumanity to man” will be a tale of the past. The spirit of Boaz and his reapers will be general — “The Lord be with you” — “The Lord bless thee” (Ruth 2:4). Into that “most holy and blessed Constitution of the thousand years” no God-ignoring ruler, and no God-ignoring subject, will be allowed to exist. Participation in this time is the joy that God has set before His children of every generation. Let us remember, as we contemplate this time, that if we would attain to it, we must now exhibit the spirit that will then prevail (1 Cor. 10:31).