

# PRAYER — A VITAL NECESSITY

"MEN ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1), was the Lord's instruction to His disciples, and the message is just as vital to us today. In this case, "not to faint" meant "never give up."



Jesus gave an example of a persistent widow's coming to an unjust judge to be avenged of her adversary. The judge said: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (Luke 18:4,5). He went on to say, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" If an unjust judge would give that woman the desire of her heart, would not a loving God do even more?

Then Jesus asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Will people still be praying when Jesus comes back? Will they still have faith in His promises?

They will if they do not faint.

Let us consider every phrase of what we call "The Lord's Prayer," as recorded in Matthew 6:9- 13:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

When we address God, we must come in reverence. We are talking to the Creator of Heaven and earth! Yet He is willing to reason with us. He once told the Israelites: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). How marvellous that the Creator is willing to listen to the creatures He has created!

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Now God's Kingdom comes into our hearts —not into political organizations, or thrones or temples. But God's people are looking forward to the time when Jesus will set up His Millennial Reign and rule the world in righteousness. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Individually, we now can let the will of the Lord be done in us. We can let Him work through us that His Kingdom may be built up. It is our privilege to say as Jesus said, "I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9). That night in Gethsemane, He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus had to die on the cross to make atonement for sin — there was no other way.

So now we pray, "Thy will be done." In other words, "Do in my heart all that You provided for me. Take care of cleansing me from sin, and purifying me. Take care of filling me with the Holy Spirit as God has provided." Jesus said: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth . . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16,17). All this is a part of the will of God for us.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

It is our privilege to teach our children the Lord's Prayer. We can teach them to trust God for their "daily bread." Our generation has seen such plenty, it may not be necessary to ask God daily to provide our food for that day, but some of us can remember when we lived much more simply. It really didn't make much difference in our happiness. The Word tells us: "A man's life consisteth not in the

abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Things do not make the inner man happy.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."  
"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We must forgive others if we want the Lord to forgive us. The disciples wanted to know how to pray, and this is part of it. There are temptations all around us, Satan's lures to lead us astray. People who watch television have all manner of evil set before their eyes to defile their thoughts, to contaminate their imaginations and set on fire the evil passions inherent in every unregenerated heart.

People roll such evils under their tongue like a sweet morsel. But God says, "Turn from evil. Don't listen to temptation." You cannot pray, "Lead us not into temptation," when you are deliberately walking into it yourself. You may say, "It doesn't contaminate me. I'm not interested in the evil that goes on in the world, the immorality and indecency." But if you continue to expose yourself to it, it will have its effect.

We hear much about the fantastic things computers do these days, but only what is programmed into them can come out. So in a spiritual sense, if our input consists of the things of the world, carnal desires, lustful thoughts, that is what our life will become.

God says that the heart of the unregenerate man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). But when "old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new," we want to be separate from sinners. We will not be blending in with the world; we will not be like them.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." That closes the Lord's Prayer. Now how are we going to pray? Our praying must begin in the home. Family worship is important from the time a couple marries. As children come along, give them the opportunity to learn about Jesus and eternal life.

It may be you as parents did not have the opportunities of family worship in your home when a child, nor the right example set before you. But God in mercy talked to your heart, and if you are a Christian today, He saved you from your sins. Now you want to obey all His teachings. And remember what Jesus said: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." So, at the peril of losing your own soul and those over whom you have influence, you must learn to pray — and then pray!

How do you learn to pray? The Lord's Prayer is a master prayer, all right, but you also can begin by kneeling before God and speaking to Him as you would to your friend. Begin by thanking Him for two knees to kneel upon before Him. If you are afflicted and can't bend your knees, you can bend your heart anyway. Thank God for something. "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

Thank God for a good night's sleep. Or if you did not sleep well, thank Him for the little sleep you did get. Pray when you can't sleep. Quote Scripture. If you don't know many texts, repeat the few you do know: the 23rd Psalm, the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, the Lord's Prayer. All the worry and evil thoughts that get into your mind will have to flee. You can't have two kinds of thoughts in your mind at the same time.

Think on these things: whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report (Philippians 4:8). Most of the time you worry about things that don't happen anyway.

By all means, start the day with prayer. Pray with your children before they leave for school and have to face the trials of life. Ask God's guidance for your own life: in the home, on the job, wherever you may meet others in your daily walk. If possible, spend some time in prayer at noon. Take God into everything you do. Feel His presence with you in every trial. Don't forget to thank Him for His provision in all things. Then when the day is done, you will be able to thank Him for another day of victory.

The Apostle James tells us, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). That means you have to put yourself into it. You have to pray with fervor. The Bible states: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). If you pray without purpose, it is no prayer at all.

You won't have much fervor in your prayers if you have an unforgiving spirit, if you are living an unholy life, or unclean. You must then first ask forgiveness — "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). Judge yourself by the Word of God.

Read on what the Apostle James said: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). Confess your own faults, and when you see faults in others, pray for them. That is a sure cure for faultfinding. It will be amazing how those faults will disappear.

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." "Anyone can sing when he has a merry heart, but can you sing, too, "when the clouds are hanging low"? God can give you songs in the night —the darkest night!

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:13-15).

Oh, the benefits of prayer! If we pray, sick bodies will be healed! Many people have been healed of dread diseases because they trusted God, believed His Word, and lined their lives to His commands — and prayed! Oh, the anxiety we can save ourselves by praying!

There are people who ridicule the idea of "praying through." Let them ridicule if they want to. The Gospel we know gets results when we pray through until the answer comes — easy or hard, prayers answered quickly or long-delayed, answered with Yes or No. But keep praying. Prayers must be prayed before they can be answered.

If you don't feel like praying, pray anyway. If your spiritual zeal has cooled, the only way to renew it is to pray. Pray until you do feel like it. Then you will get the ear of God. God's promise is: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). Yes, we must believe when we pray. If you can't believe, ask God to remove the hindrances that have clogged your faith channels. The answer may not always be Yes, but God knows what is best; and if we want His will to be done in us, we will recognize what is best.

When we start to pray in faith, our desire to pray will grow. The Holy Spirit will help us. Satan will put all kinds of hindrances in our way, but when we set ourselves to do the will of God, Satan must flee. Ask God to give you a burden for the lost. Prevail with Him, and He will save your loved ones, bring back the straying ones, rescue the dying. Believers will be sanctified wholly, and the pure in heart will receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And the Kingdom of Heaven will be set up in the hearts of men as we pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."