

From Where I Sit . . .

"PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP"

To too many people, prayer is saved primarily for use as one of the "acts" of worship and for special offerings before eating our food. Some fail to do either. Too long has skepticism clouded our faith in prayer. To the Christian, prayer must become far more a "way of life" than merely a step in satisfying a requirement of Christian worship. Robert Milligan wrote more than a century ago, "It is, therefore, a most benevolent and gracious provision of the Scheme of Redemption that God permits, invites, and encourages his children to pray; to pray always, to pray every-where, and for all things that are necessary to their present and eternal well-being." (The Scheme Of Redemption, p. 367).

I am so thankful that the Father of mercies has invited us to... *"come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16). Prayer should become to a faithful child of God a natural impulse, the most logical "first thing we think of in good times as well as in bad." When something exciting happens, many of us have a reaction, "I can't wait until I tell about it." We generally thrill to share the good news with others, and in most cases we don't hesitate to share the heartaches as well. Our goal should be to develop the "habit of prayer" to the extent that we just can't wait to "tell God about it." Of course He already knows, but how does that detract from our desire or need to talk to Him about it. That's what prayer is for.

Our word "prayer" covers a wide spectrum of communications with God from petitions (requests or entreaties) supplications, intercession, to thanksgiving and praise. In humble prayer, the mind turns in upon itself and our conscience is awakened. We there see ourselves for all our inadequacies in light of Heaven. It might be easy to lie to others, but it's hard to lie when one is talking directly with God. In prayer one is able to be truthfully open up to God acknowledging our weaknesses, our needs, our hurts, our appreciation. In such a state of mind, we are compelled to be humble, to repent of our sins, to forgive our enemies, to sympathize with the afflicted, to adore our Creator, to love our redeemer (Milligan, p. 370).

Milligan suggests that "In no other religious exercise are we brought so near to God; in no other can he be so familiar with the Creator of our bodies and the Father and Preserver of our spirits (p. 371). As we become attached to those we associate muchly with, even so we grow attached to God through our frequent association with Him in prayer.

The disciples on one occasion asked the Lord to teach them to pray: "*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples*" (Luke 11:1). We should spend time reading the prayers of Jesus, and men like Paul who fills much of his texts with his prayers for the brethren. The words are spiritual. They honor the Lord. They express the earnest feelings and needs in both their hearts. When Jesus gave the disciples a model prayer He did not give them a "ritual" that's to be repeated at special events or as a replacement to genuine heartfelt petitions. Rather, He shared with them ways in which God is appropriately honored, and in which needs of all kinds are expressed, for ourselves and for others. May prayer fill our hearts and our Spiritual service to God.

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