

## PRAYER.

"I pray for them:" John 17:9.

The seventeenth Chapter of John is known as the High Priest's prayer. In olden times the High Priest used to go into the temple at regular and stated seasons to pray for the people. Here the Lord, who was High Priest of the Christian Church, prays for the little flock He was about to leave. The words sound more like John's own than a written transcript of the Lord's prayer. But, even if John wrote the prayer from memory, it is still a beautiful prayer, full of anxious solicitation for the one's He loved. Jesus was a praying Man. He was no recluse, leaving the world in misery, while He did nothing but pray. He prayed while He labored for man's redemption. He prayed Himself and taught His disciples to pray. When He went into the temple and cast out the greedy money changers, He said, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." Every house of God should be a house of prayer.

"What is the use of praying? I already have everything I want. What more could I ask for?" These words are credited to Andrew Carnegie. But it is certain that he was not the only one who ever said this. If others did not make the same statement in these words, they expressed them in their heart. Andrew Carnegie was not the worst man of his age. He was a better man than many of his neighbors. He was kind, charitable, and honest, by the standards of his time. He might have had everything he wanted, but he did not have all he needed. The trouble with men who are so satisfied with life they have no time to talk with God, is that it never lasts. There comes a time in the

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life of every man when the comforts and consolations of this life fail him. Then if he has not learned to talk to God he is likely to become bitter and rebellious.

Even if he had everything he wanted, he might have said "Thank you" to the One who gave it all to him. Did he owe God nothing? If he had felt any gratitued for all God's favors he surely would have wanted to tell Him. If we spent our whole lives on our knees in deep thanksgiving it would be but a little return for all we have received.

Even if we have all we need-- and I have never known a person that did---how about the millions all around us? In all my life I have never known a day when some one I knew and loved did not need God's help badly. We could pray for the ones more unfortunate than we. If we are living solely for ourselves we might ask, "What is the use of praying?" If we do not care or feel for others, we might take all the goodness and favors of God and never ask for anything more, or give Him thanks for what He has already given us. But surely a man who loves his neighbor will find many times when his heart is burdened for the pain or sorrows of others. Accepting God's favor without thanking Him is nothing new. When the Lord healed ten lepers only one came back to thank Him.

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore  
let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day."

Tennyson.

If we only knew how much is wrought by prayer we would surely pray more. Prayer transorms the lives of men and women. Loud prayers made to be heard of men may not help us; selfish

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petitions for something we want for our own selfish use, may be in vain. But a fervent sincere prayer always brings a person closer to God. One cannot pray fervently, sincerely and regularly and be a bad person. One who prays in the right way will soon quit praying or quit sinning. The two will not go together.

Why are so many people disappointed with prayer? One of the most common causes of disappointment with prayer is expecting the end without the means. We ask God to do things for us that we are too lazy to do for ourselves. We cry loud for Him to move a hill because we are too lazy to climb it. Climbing the hill might be the means of a closer touch of God's hand.

At the Battle of Horseshoe Bend the Indians drew a magic line across the neck of the bend. Their medicine men consecrated this line with strong medicine and told the Indians that any white man who crossed it would fall dead instantly. This false hope proved their ruin. When Jackson's men began crossing the line without harm, they lost heart and fled. This is one of the typical disappointments of prayer. If the Indians had not been too lazy they could have built a fort across the neck of the bend and defended themselves with far more security.

Some even go so far as to say that if we do anything ourselves to help answer our prayer, then we have no faith. There was never a more foolish assertion. Two little girls were about to be late for school. One of them said, "Let's kneel down and pray for the Lord not to let us be tardy." The other one said, "No, let's hike on to school and pray while we are hiking." She was praying with her lips and her

feet. Some of the most effective prayers ever made were made with human hands. If we offer God our hands and feet, our toil and sweat, with our prayers, that proves we do have faith.

Some faith healers say that if we take medicine when we are ill that proves we have no faith. Some poor deluded ones have actually let their children die when a good doctor could have saved them. They were afraid if they allowed a doctor to come their neighbors and friends would say they did not have faith. It would be just as sensible to refuse food and expect to live. God gave us the medicine and the food.

The fanatic says God does not need our help. They think offering Him our feeble hands is showing a lack of faith in His power. The Bible does not teach this. Noah built the Ark with his hands. Naaman had to dip himself in the Jordan seven times to be healed of leprosy. Suppose he had said, as some fanatics do today, that this would be proving he had no faith. He did come very near missing the blessing because of another stubborn belief.

To pray fervently one must want something very much. We cannot be very much concerned about a cause to which we have contributed nothing. To pray effectively we must first have worked hard and long, or loved and suffered. We must have a great love or a great hope.

"If I were damned in body and soul

I know whose prayers would make me whole

Mother o' mine." Kipling.

Why is a mother's prayer so effective? Because she usually has so much on the line. She has given so much. Surely our prayers will amount to nothing if we have given nothing.

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Does prayer change God? Why would we want to change God? No matter how much we want a good thing done, God wants it more. No matter how much we have given to a great cause, God has given much more. Prayer does not change God; it changes the one who prays. We, by prayer, come up to where God was all the time. He is already far more interested in the cause than we are. Prayer does something for the one who prays. Even if God says "No" to our prayer, He always gives us something better than we prayed for. Our problems are never solved in way we expected. God's way is always better far than ours.

James Montgomery's great hymn on prayer is one of the best:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Unuttered or expressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glance of any eye,  
When none but God is near.

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try;  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high.

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice  
Returning from his ways;  
While angels in their songs rejoice  
And cry, "Behold he prays".

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death  
He enters heaven with prayer.

"O Thou, by whom we come to God  
The Life, the Truth, the Way,  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod.  
Lord, teach us how to pray."