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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth

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*"The Churches of Christ
Salute You"*

WITH A
HERALD OF TRUTH

THE POWER OF PRAYERS

#31

September 7, 1952

by James D. Willeford



Station WCAE

3:00 P.M.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

When the Allied armies were ready to land on the shores of France to storm the ramparts of Nazi Germany, the word was given to pray. On D-Day millions of prayers went up from servicemen and civilians. Almost every paper and magazine carried printed prayers as our soldiers wrestled with a determined foe. One paper said, "All in all, the invasion probably inspired the greatest mass intercession in history."

But the moment the Allies won the war they forgot to pray! When our statesmen started forming a peace treaty at the San Francisco Conference they neglected to ask God's help. I believe this is the first major conference in which the United States took part that prayer for divine guidance was not uttered.

3 In our efforts to bring a just and lasting peace to the world we should do well to remember the words of Benjamin Franklin as he spoke to the Chairman of the Constitutional Convention. He said, "I have lived, sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the sacred writing that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

In our generation many discount prayer and look upon it as useless. This is due to their little faith, and their shortsightedness. To the man void of faith, prayer is a vain cry in the wilderness with no one to answer, but to the man of faith, it is an address to God who has the ability to respond. The Bible repeatedly affirms that God listens to our righteous petitions and that he answers them. In the book of James the Lord says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Just how much, we do not always know, but every scriptural prayer accomplishes something. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that the cup of death be removed from him, the request was not granted, but still the prayer accomplished something! The cup of death was not removed, but He found strength to bear it. And the Bible teaches that every prayer which

goes out of a good man's heart, goes somewhere and does some good! It is a power in this world. When He to whom prayer is offered tells us that it is heard and that it avails much, can we not believe it? His eye can trace it when ours cannot.

5 The power of prayer can be seen by what it has done in the past. We learn from the Bible that prayer stilled the tempest, opened the windows of heaven, raised the dead, stopped the mouths of lions, delivered from death, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and speech to the dumb. It has been the Balm of Gilead to thousands of righteous souls.

Sometimes God may not grant our request because He sees it is not good for us. When we were children we may have asked our earthly father for something which he knew would harm us, and he had to say NO. He refused to grant our request because it would harm us. Instead of giving what we asked he may have substituted something far better for us, and in this way our petition was answered. And so it is with the Lord as He answers our prayers.

7 God will not answer just any kind of a prayer! He has given certain conditions of acceptable prayer, and these conditions must be met before the Lord will hear us. Men can pray and not be heard! Jesus says to certain ones, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts", James 4:3. I could not ask God to let me rest upon flowery beds of ease, or to give me a yacht that I might sail the seven seas, and expect Him to grant my request. Such a prayer would be prompted by selfishness. Prayer is not like a button which we push for a "bellhop". There are some who have a "bellhop" conception of God. When they are in danger of discomfort; when their body is threatened, they want to press the button of prayer and ask God to hurry and remove the danger. They never say "thank you" and they seldom think of God except when they are in trouble. If all we want with God is to summon Him to get us out of trouble now and then, we have a wrong conception of God and of prayer. It is right to pray in time of trouble, but it is not right to regard prayer simply as a means of calling God when we are in danger. Such prayers are not answered.

Another condition of acceptable prayer is that we be righteous. The apostle Peter says, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers", 1 Peter 3:12.

We cannot continue in wickedness and expect God to hear us. The apostle John says, "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." The Lord says the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And in Acts 10:35 we find that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." If we keep God's commandments and live righteously, He will accept our prayers -- and it does not make any difference on which side of the tracks we live, or the color of our skin. The Lord hears men of every nation who do His will. Once a little white boy said to a little colored girl, "Jenny, do you pray?" and Jenny replied, "Of course, every night". "But do you think", the boy continued, "that God hears your prayers as quickly as those of white children?" The girl was confused a moment, but then she answered beautifully, "See here, Master Arthur, I pray into God's ears and not into His eyes!" The Bible says that in Christ Jesus "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Him." Galatians 3:28.

For our prayers to be answered, we must pray in the name of Christ. Jesus said, "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, that will I do." John 14:13,14. A scriptural prayer must be prayed in Christ's name; otherwise it is not acceptable to the Father. A few years ago in a New Mexico town a prayer was printed daily on the front page of the paper. The minister who wrote the prayer always left the name of Christ out of it. In explaining his action he said there were several citizens in the community who did not believe Christ to be the Son of God and out of deference to them he omitted Christ's name from the prayer. On the basis of his reasoning, I always wondered why he did not leave out the prayer altogether for there were several other citizens in the same town who did not even believe in God. This man's willful disregard of the Lord Jesus was nothing less than a sinful denial of Him!

A further condition of acceptable prayer is faith. The writer of Hebrews says, "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him", Heb. 11:6. In speaking of prayer the Lord says we must "ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the

sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1:6,7. We must believe in God and believe He will give what He has promised. If we ask for things He has not promised to give, we ask without faith; for faith comes by our hearing God's word, Romans 10:17. The Lord's word reveals unto us His will regarding prayer, and the Bible says "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." If we believe the Lord's word and then pray for that which is in harmony with His will it will not take us long to discover the power there is in prayer.

There is power in prayer to heal the broken-hearted, to lift up the fallen, to dispel the darkest clouds, to take the sting from death, and to give us a taste of our heavenly home. Prayer can give us renewed hope as we take the body of a loved one to the city of the dead, and it can show us a star in the darkest sky. Prayer can help us in making difficult decisions of life, and it can help us walk in the paths of righteousness. Truly it makes us strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Many have been disappointed in prayer because they failed to pray in harmony with the Lord's will as recorded in His word.

With all the power of prayer, there is one thing it cannot do! It can never take the place of obedience to Christ. We hear some radio evangelists tell people to kneel at their radio and pray for pardon and that God will grant it. The Bible nowhere teaches that God will save an alien sinner by prayer alone. After Christ rose from the dead, He stated the terms of pardon in the last chapters of the gospel records, and according to these terms He requires men to hear the word, believe in the Lord, repent of their sins, and be immersed into Christ. All the praying in the world will not change God's law of grace. Many religious leaders have sinners come to the mourners bench and beg God to save them at the moment without their doing what Jesus commanded in the Great Commission. Such a practice ignores the Lord's word and what He tells all men they must do to be saved. The practice is a reflection upon God, for it looks as though He is not willing to save them without their begging and pleading with Him to do so. But Paul says "We persuade men", not God. The Lord is ready to save to the uttermost all who come to Him. He is not willing that any should perish, but He wants all to come to repentance. After Jesus gave the plan of salvation which the apostles were to preach to every creature, there is no example

of anyone being saved simply by praying. Read the book of Acts and see all the conversions for yourself. As He prayed, Paul was commanded to "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord", Acts 22:16. Sinners were not invited to a mourners bench of prayer; they were told by the apostles to believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and be immersed into the Lord.

17 Sinners should pray that they may learn the truth, and that they may have the opportunity to obey it, but they should not ask God to save them without obedience to His will, for this He has never promised to do. If God should set aside His specified terms of pardon and save one person by prayer, contrary to what He has revealed, He would be obligated to do so for all who call upon Him, since He is no respecter of persons. In doing this God would deny Himself by denying His word, but the apostle says, "He cannot deny Himself." 2 Tim. 2:13.

At this point, someone may ask, "But didn't Paul say in Romans 10:13 that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?" That is very true, but we must not overlook the Lord's definition of calling upon Him. Jesus said, "Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke 6:46. Christ further said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock". Matt. 7:24. Calling upon the Lord means to come to Him in humble obedience to His will. This person will never be rejected and the Son of God will save him.

15 Sinner friend, this may be D-Day and Zero Hour for you! The silver cord of your life may be snapped at any time! No man knows the day or the hour wherein the summons from on high may be presented by the hand of the death angel. I would not hold out false hopes and suggest that you may become a Christian simply by praying. No man can make any such promise. I am not trying to judge you, but neither am I trying to justify you. Before God you stand or fall. Do not let any man lull you into a sense of false security by telling you to pray for forgiveness. I plead with you to obey the gospel and Christ will become the Author of eternal salvation to you. As long as you do His will you need never plead "Pass me not, O Gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by." If you are a Christian, and

you pray in harmony with God's will you can truly sing, "O how praying rests the weary; prayer will change the night to day. So when life seems dark and dreary, Don't forget to pray." As one Christian to another you can admonish, "Pray in the Morning, Pray at the Noon-time, Pray in the Evening, Pray anytime. Pray when you're happy, Pray when in sorrow, Pray when you're tempted, Pray all the time." But O Sinner friend, you cannot call God your Father until you become His child, and so I plead with you to accept Him and obey His will today. Believe in His Son, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Christ, and you will find that the eyes of the Lord are over you and His ears are open unto your prayers.

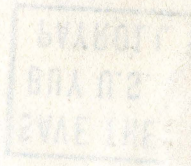
IS THY HEART RIGHT WITH GOD?

Have thine affections been nailed to the cross?
Is thy heart right with God?
Dost thou count all things for Jesus but loss?
Is thy heart right with God?

Hast thou dominion o'er self and o'er sin?
Is thy heart right with God?
Over all evil without and within?
Is thy heart right with God?

Are all thy powers under Jesus' control?
Is thy heart right with God?
Does He each moment abide in thy soul?
Is thy heart right with God?

Refrain:
Is thy heart right with God,
Washed in the crimson flood,
Cleansed and made holy, humble and lowly,
Right in the sight of God?



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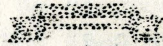
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