

# Foundation of Faith

---

## *The* **Power** *of Prayer*

**STRENGTH IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD**

**PRAY UNTIL THE ANSWER COMES**

**TRAINING UP VICTORS, NOT VICTIMS**

**OBSTACLES TO PRAYER**

**AGING GRACEFULLY**

# Contents

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

### 4 Effective Prayer

*He poured out his heart to God and cast his care upon Him, and God cared for him.*

### 5 Prayer is Effective

### 6 Pray until the Answer Comes

### 7 Strength in Fellowship with God

*People who know their God well are those who pray.*

### 8 Steadfast Prayer

### 9 The Practice of Prayer

### 10 The Power of Intercession

*Intercession is a sacred and important task entrusted to us by God.*

### 11 Prayerful People are Miracle Workers

### 12 The Power of Prayer

### 13 Obstacles to Prayer

### 14 Ensuing Power and Results of Prayer

*Many of God's works are due to the earnest prayers of His children.*

### 3 Editorial

#### YOUTH PAGES

### 16 Training up Victors, Not Victims

### 18 Spread Out Your Letter Before the Lord

#### CHILDREN'S CORNER

### 19 Why Doesn't God Answer All Prayers?

*Only after many years did he receive the answer to this question.*

#### SERIES: WAYWARD CHILDREN

### 20 The Path to Understanding

#### SENIORS' PAGES

### 22 Aging Gracefully - Part 3

### 24 The Reward of Earnest Prayer

### 25 Answered Prayer—Does It Exist?

### 26 The Lord Convicted Me of my Lack of Prayer

### 27 "Prayer" and "True Prayer" are Two Different Things

#### POEMS

### 28 I Will Pray

## FOUNDATION OF FAITH

*Editor*

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

*Editorial Team*

Niko Ernst

Harry Semenjuk

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

•  
The FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a journal of vital Christianity, published in the interest of the Church of God, that takes a clear and decisive stand for full salvation in Christ, the unity of all true believers, and the truths of the Bible.

The editors reserve the right to abridge and edit all materials and information submitted for publication. Research sources are listed for information only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

•  
Questions and suggestions can be sent to:  
[contact@foundationoffaith.cc](mailto:contact@foundationoffaith.cc)

Please address all other correspondence and subscription requests to:  
Christian Unity Press  
5195 Exchange Drive  
Flint, MI 48507  
Tel.: (810) 732-1831  
or email us at  
[cupress@thechurchofgod.cc](mailto:cupress@thechurchofgod.cc)  
[www.christianunitypress.com](http://www.christianunitypress.com)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Flint, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA Volume 21 Issue 8

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a trademark owned by Christian Unity Press in the United States and foreign countries.

Printed in USA.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is published free of charge. All expenses are covered by freewill donations.

## Editorial

*Dear Reader,*

*People have always prayed.*

*A detailed account shows us how Eliezer, Abraham's servant, prayed. He was sent to look for a bride for Isaac. In Genesis 24, we find his prayer:*

*“O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac.’ . . . And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah . . . came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.”*

*She did precisely what Eliezer had requested. What a wonderful answer to prayer!*

*Throughout the scriptures, we find many examples showing us how God heard and answered faithful supplications and pleas.*

*Listen to how King David takes refuge in God in prayer: “I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill” (Psalm 3: 4).*

*Yes, dear reader, how often the Lord has also answered my prayers and yours. How wonderfully He has extended His protective hand in dangerous situations. In several cases where I felt helpless and uncertain, He gave light through prayer. Over the years, I was able to experience again and again how the words of Psalm 32:8 were fulfilled: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.”*

*I can only give thanks and exclaim, “O, how great is our God!” Who always encourages us to come to Him in prayer.*

*H. D. Nimz*

# Effective Prayer

## *A Real-life Experience*

“No!” exclaimed the lawyer. “I will not file a case against that man on your behalf! You can either hire another lawyer, or you can just drop the case. Make your decision.”

“Is it because you think you won’t make enough money?” asked the man.

“Oh, I would likely get enough money, but you know the little house where the old man lives would have to be sold, and I want nothing to do with the matter!” retorted the lawyer.

“Are you afraid?” his client asked with a sneer.

“No, I’m not,” was the reply.

“I imagine the old man pleaded desperately enough until you promised to let him be.”

“Well, he did plead,” was his curt answer.

“So you went soft, didn’t you?” the client prompted.

“No, I didn’t say a word to him.”

“Are you saying the man did all the talking?”

“Yes, he did.”

“And you didn’t say a word?”

“Not a word,” he replied.

“What on earth did you do?” asked the exasperated client.

“I think I cried a few tears,” the lawyer calmly stated.

“Do you mean the old man begged you so much?”

“No, he didn’t say a word to me.”

“Well then, did you overhear him talking to someone?”

“He spoke to the Almighty God.”

“Oh, so he was praying?”

“Yes, but he certainly wasn’t praying for me. You see, this is how it unfolded.” Unhurried, the lawyer gravely related this story.

“I searched for the little house and found it on your behalf, quite easily. When I knocked at the door and no one seemed to have heard me, I entered the vestibule and peered through a crack in the door. There was the coziest little living room I have ever seen. In the corner, lying amidst many pillows on a bed was an old, silver-haired lady. I was immediately reminded of

the last time that I saw my own mother.

“I was about to knock, when I heard her say, ‘Come now, Father, I’m ready.’ in front of her bed, an older man with even whiter hair than his wife sank to his knees. No way in the world was I going to knock on that door!

“Then he prayed and cried out to God. He reminded God that he and his wife were His children and that they would happily bear whatever He allowed. He continued his earnest prayer, saying it would be so terribly difficult for them if they needed to vacate their home at their ages, especially since his wife was so ill. Oh yes, they had experienced even sadder things than this in their lives. If only one of their sons were still alive, how different it would be then.

“Here his voice failed, as tears choked him up. But when the tender hand of his wife stroked his silver hair, he went on to say that nothing would ever be as tragic as the death of their sons . . . unless it were the separation from each other. At last, he asked God, if there was no other way, to let them die according to His will, for if the little house was to be taken from them, he saw no other way than the unspeakable way to the poorhouse. And then he reminded God of so many promises that apply to those who trust in Him.

“Yes, I tell you, he prayed very hard. It was the most earnest prayer I have ever heard. At the end, he asked God to bless those who would be looking after the legalities. And let me tell you, I would rather go to the poorhouse myself, this very day, than defile my conscience with a charge against that man.”

“I assume you’re worried you’ll be defeated by this old man’s prayer?” asked the client.

“How could it be otherwise?” countered the lawyer. “I tell you, he surrendered everything to God’s will, but I could tell what his earnest desire was. I once learned about such things in my youth. Oh, what in the world made me listen to this prayer, after all? I will happily transfer this matter into other hands.”

“I wish you hadn’t told me about the prayer,” the other continued, shifting uneasily back and forth in his chair.

“Why is that?” questioned the lawyer.

“Well, I’d really like the money that property would provide, but I also learned something as a young boy from the Bible, and I sure wouldn’t like to fight against anything like you’re talking about. I also wish you hadn’t heard that prayer, and I would advise you not to listen to any in the future either.”

The lawyer smiled. “My dear man,” he said, “you are mistaken; I was supposed to hear it, and so should

you! God must have willed it so! My old mother often sang a song of God’s wonderful ways, which I still remember.”

“Well, my mother sang it, too,” said the plaintiff, flipping sheepishly through the indictment files before him. “You can tell the old folks in the morning that the matter of the house is all settled,” he then added.

The lawyer smiled and called after him, “In a mysterious and wonderful way, right?” ■



## *Prayer is Effective*

**I**t was many years ago. A godly woman had long been pained that there was no house of worship in her town where people could gather for services. She began to pray earnestly and bring this matter before God. Then she felt the leading of God’s Spirit to start something herself and invite the neighbors to a prayer meeting.

There was a vacant old house nearby. The woman received permission to hold a prayer meeting there. She recognized in it an answer to her prayers and, after completing her hard work, went from house to house inviting people to the prayer meeting she would hold at a certain hour in the vacant house.

When the appointed hour arrived, she was there with her Bible and hymnal. She had brought her lantern, which served as a makeshift light for the room. However, no one came; she remained alone. But she sang and prayed as if a number of people were present.

The following week, she went again at the appointed hour. On this second evening, too, she remained alone. But some curious people dared to sneak up to the windows and listen or see what was going on in

the house. The woman sang several songs and prayed fervently to God. This went on for several weeks.

One evening, as she was on her way home, one of the men who had been listening outside asked if it was not discouraging to keep trying to hold prayer meetings when no one came.

She replied, “Jesus is with me; I am never alone.”

The following week, she was there again at the same time and began to sing. Then two women dared to go in and join in the song they knew. Little by little, some men came with their wives. And after the course of a year, some souls had given their lives to the Lord and helped the godly woman to the best of their ability. From week to week, the number of those who gathered for prayer grew.

Three years after this woman had started a prayer meeting in the empty house, the number of believers was large enough for them to build a small house of worship. The Lord gave His blessing, and more and more were added to the number of God’s children.

Truly, “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). ■



## *Pray until the Answer Comes*

**I**n Luke 11: 5–13, Jesus tells the parable of a man who came to his friend in the middle of the night with the request to lend him three loaves of bread. In Luke 18: 1–8, He shows us the persistent petition of the widow to the ungodly judge.

Both of these parables show us the need for persistent prayer. Jesus makes a point of letting us understand that true prayer is more than just confidently offering our requests.

Prayer that God can answer must be offered sincerely and from the heart. If the expected answer does not come immediately, we must not give up, but continue to pray fervently. Prayer that accomplishes something pleasing to God and is answered by Him must be earnest and persistent, even if the answer is delayed.

We know that God is always ready to give us what we need. He does not withdraw and is not too busy to heed our prayer. He is not heartless like the unjust judge in Luke 18.

Heavenly matters often involve delays, which test our prayers and our faith. Yet God always knows what we really need and when we need it.

He blesses us through all He provides. This should inspire our prayer. He wants us to recognize our needs and bring them before Him in true sincerity. There are times when prayer seems easy, but at other times it is not, and then we are tempted to slack off in prayer. But we gain nothing by doing so. We must not let off, but rather we must pray our way through it.

We will reap abundant rewards for persevering until the answer comes. The Lord Jesus Himself tells

us that God always hears us and will give us what we need.

“Praying through it” is not always easy. For example, there is the tempter who wants us to slow down and give up. And then there is the weariness in prayer, the giving up before the answer comes. In our time of busyness and haste, the danger of growing weary and discouraged is great. Jesus, however, admonishes us not to grow weary but to persist in prayer. It is through the delay in answering our prayer that our faith and earnestness are tested. If our faith passes the test and our earnestness proves to be truly genuine, the answer will most certainly come.

Jesus says in reference to persistent prayer, “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11: 10). These words from Jesus should never be anything other than encouraging and faith-strengthening.

As the disciples observed Jesus in prayer, they became convinced that there was an important connection between looking up to God with faith and trust and successfully pressing forward in working for God. They recognized the power and necessity of prayer.

The disciples heard Jesus ask the heavenly Father for what He needed. They heard how He sought and knocked at the gate of heaven. They saw the answer to His prayers over and over again. The answer always came, though sometimes delayed. Dear reader, let us also pray like the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray”!

*J. E. Massy*



## *Strength* in Fellowship with God

**W**hen we pray, we take the opportunity to speak with God. In this way He can speak to us more clearly, and we become better acquainted with Him and His will.

Our heavenly Father loves His children and can and wants to help them. But our prayers must be persistent, fervent, full of faith, and in accordance with God's will. Yes, then we may also expect an answer.

When we read the Bible and look at great leaders, we find those who had communion with God in prayer. The secret of Abraham's successful life was his prayer life with God. This man could pray. He could hear God speak and was also obedient to Him.

Moses, the man of God, who walked with God, was able, with God's assistance, to lead the people of Israel through a sea as through dry land. Through the prayer, faith, and obedience of Joshua, the walls of Jericho fell. Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months. And then he prayed for rain and God gave it. In this regard, the apostle James says, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours" (James 5:17). By this, James means to say that all believers have the privilege of offering their petitions to God, for he emphasizes in verse 16: "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Daniel was not touched by the lions in the lions' den, for he was a man of prayer.

Jesus, although He was the Son of God, took time for prayer. Sometimes He spent whole nights in prayer before His Father.

It is not only in the Bible that we find people who cultivated prayer. A servant of President Lin-

coln once looked through the keyhole to see what he was doing. She saw him on his knees in prayer. It is said of John Knox that when he prayed, all Scotland trembled. Livingstone was found on his knees when he died. Praying, he had passed from time into eternity. Many other successful men and women were prayer warriors.—If such important people needed prayer, how much more we who have less rank and position?

It does not matter how great our needs are. God is able and willing to give us what we need. Matthew 19:26 says, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Through the power of prayer, we can obtain forgiveness of our sins, a peace that is higher than all understanding, a strength that surpasses all human power, a faith for which many things are possible, a trust that will not fail us even if the world were to end, guidance according to God's will, God's presence, and healing of the body, if only we ask for it.

Through my own experience, I myself have received testimony that there is great power in the prayer of faith. Miraculously, God healed me from a serious ailment. Yes, I can also sing with the poet:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All my sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!*

A. E. Oelke

# Steadfast Prayer

**T**he passage of Luke 11:5-10 ends with a great promise: “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” These words astonish us, because they go far beyond our wildest expectations. If we had no other promises in the Word of God, these verses would be sufficient to awaken our faith. They would cause us to confidently bring Him all our needs, whatever they may be. In faith, we could even grasp healing by the power of God from these words.

This scripture shows us one who does not want to get up at midnight to lend his friend some bread. The determined plea of his friend caused him to do so anyway. Jesus teaches us to be steadfast in our asking, seeking, and knocking (Matthew 7:7-11 and Luke 18:1-8).

“Ask, and it will be given to you”—that is a definite statement and should suffice. Yet Jesus wants His listeners, and those who would read His words, to truly grasp what He is saying about steadfastness in prayer, so He adds, “And he who seeks finds.” Not some, but all who earnestly seek and persevere in seeking will find. That is the promise of Jesus.

This is good news for all who are ill and suffering. If you need help, take courage and rekindle your hope. Reread the words of the Lord over and over again until your faith, which may be dying, is rekindled into a bright, burning flame. Your burning faith will devour all doubt and pave the way so that you are able receive help from the Lord.

Now, you may ask: Why is it necessary to be steadfast and persevere in prayer? Why does God not always help right away? You must persevere because the devil, who opposes the will of God, wishes to hinder your prayers and keep them from being answered. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, “Therefore we wanted

to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.” Now if Satan can hinder a man of God like Paul, then he will also do his best to hinder us in our endeavors.

In Daniel chapter 10, we read that Daniel prayed for three weeks before he received the answer to his prayer. Can we understand why even we need to persevere in prayer before receiving an answer?

A further reason we need to be steadfast is because sometimes there are obstacles in the way that first need to be removed. This may take time. Sometimes the obstacle to be overcome may even lie with us. If we are earnest in steadfast prayer, God can show us what the problem is. Looking back over my own life, I can see that often it would not have been good for me if God had instantly answered my prayer and healed me right away. If we are steadfast in prayer, we learn a useful skill that has often been lost in our day, namely to take time to be still before God, gain insight, and think deeply about spiritual things.

When we persevere and earnestly pray, we will be distracted from the things of this world and focus more and more on the spiritual and the eternal. As we distance ourselves from the temporal, our soul becomes more rooted in the things of God and reaches down into the depths of His grace. In that way, our afflictions and suffering which compel us to pray are often the means which help us to rise above earthly things.

The problem with many is that they do not persevere and remain steadfast until the gold has been fully refined. In other words, they get discouraged. They may say: “God does not listen to my prayer anyway.” Others give in to a feeling of defeat and discontent and think, “What have I done? What did I do to deserve this, that God does not answer my prayer?”



Some may even think God has forgotten about them and deserted them. Those who entertain such thoughts should meditate on the love of God that is so overwhelming and was lived out by Jesus as He was here on earth. Carefully read the four gospels with a prayerful heart. There is no love that even comes close to the love of Jesus. His love is there for you and me. Submit yourself to the will of God, remain humble, and do not allow your faith to grow weak and falter. The day will come when you will emerge heroically like Joseph in Egypt, whose way

to freedom led through many trials, even slavery and prison. All of the heroes of faith in the Bible had a steadfast faith. Therefore, take courage. If you remain steadfast in earnest prayer, the angels of God will protect you.

If you are discouraged and think that God has forgotten about you, think again, because this word in the Bible is for you: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15). ■



## The Practice of Prayer

There is a generally-held view that when we pray, we want something from God. This impression is not wrong; we certainly obtain something when we bring our petitions to the Lord in prayer. But the focus of true prayer is not the desire to get something from God or to expect something from Him, but to glorify Him. If my primary goal is not to seek His help and His grace, but His honor, His pleasure, His satisfaction, what He longs for, that which serves Him and His kingdom, the help I need will be added unto me (see Matthew 6:33).

True prayer is a manifestation of love for God, in which we desire nothing more ardently than to please Him, our Father. And he who sows joy will reap joy. If the spirit of this world thinks it gains only through demands, love knows that it gains through giving.

We do not always know in what way God will answer our prayers. Nor is it absolutely necessary. We are to send up requests in faith to God and then, with a

calmness that is consistent with true faith, leave the answer to Him. He will give us the answer that He considers good and right for us.

After we have sent up a prayer in confident trust, we should not agonize over the matter in any way, regardless if the answer comes at once, or whether God, for reasons more glorifying to Him, delays reply. As such, we must pay attention to only one thing, and that is to “hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

Sometimes people send up an earnest prayer to the Lord for a cause they desperately desire. In doing so, they have a specific idea of how the Lord should answer. However, our idea may not concur with God’s will, and therefore God may not answer our prayer because He knows what’s best for us.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). ■

# The Power of Intercession

**T**raveling to Bern by train, I met a nurse who appeared very depressed. We began talking, and she explained her sadness.

“I am not old,” she said, “and yet I have to give up my beautiful career. I have become ill, and I would so gladly still have served the poor, the sick, and the destitute. I feel as if my work for the Lord is over, and yet I want to do something.”

I empathized and understood her very well. I tried to encourage her to continue to trust the Lord who makes no mistakes.

In Bern, we got off the train and walked together from the platform down the stairs toward the exit. There I said to her, “The Lord Jesus has a very special task for you, even if you can no longer serve Him in your profession.”

Expectantly, the nurse asked, “What does He want from me?”

I have been declared sick and unable to work.”

“That is precisely why the Lord has appointed another task for you,” I continued. “I believe the Lord Jesus wants to use you as a prayer warrior, to whom He can give unceasing prayer assignments for people around the world.”

She breathed a deep sigh of relief and said, “So there is a job for me after all.”

I told her about the necessity of praying for missionaries but also for her brothers and sisters in Christ, and how the Lord Jesus looks for sanctified people who can provide this important service. With great joy, the dear sister said to me: “Now I am no longer afraid of the future. Now I have received a mission so great and so important to occupy me. The Lord Jesus has taken over the responsibility, and He will surely lead and guide me. Now, after all, I may do much more than I could among the sick.” Delighted and comforted, we parted. Jesus had given her a new vision.

All of God’s great deeds began with a prayer.

Charles Finney wrote: I knew a pastor who, for 14 years, experienced revival every winter. I had no explanation for it until one day I witnessed one of his congregation members stand up in a prayer meeting and make a confession. “Brethren,” he said, “I have long been in the habit of praying every Saturday night until after midnight that the Holy Spirit would work in us. And now, brethren,” and he began to weep, “I confess that for the last two or three weeks I have neglected it.”

The secret was in his prayers. The arm of God is moved by intercession. The purpose of such a prayer is not to bring about a change in God’s disposition or in His nature, but to change us and enable God to act through us. Without our knowledge, we and others are often blessed and strengthened by intercession. Nothing makes us love a person more than praying for him. ■

## Prayerful People are Miracle Workers

**E**arnest, persistent prayer is very necessary in our time. It is easy to slacken in prayer if the answer is not immediate. But if you want to be effective in prayer, you must not stop until the answer comes. Jacob, who was wrestling with God, understood this. He said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” He was determined not to give up the fight until he won the victory, and he was rewarded for his perseverance and persistence. He received not only the desired blessing but so much more. His name changed from Jacob, which can mean “supplanter,” to Israel, which can mean “one who struggles with God.”

The mother of the prophet Samuel, Hannah, also knew something of earnest prayer’s power. She was grieved by the constant mockery coming from her rival, “because the LORD had closed [Hannah’s] womb.” All the comforting words of her husband could not satisfy her soul. So, she took refuge in God. She went to the temple of God and poured out her heart before Him and persevered in prayer. When the high priest Eli addressed her and rebuked her, she said, “My lord, I *am* a woman of sorrowful spirit. I . . . have poured out my soul before the LORD” (1 Samuel 1:15). And her prayer was answered.

About five years later, Hannah stood in the temple again, but not with a sad heart. Her heart was filled with joy, and she said to Eli, “I *am* the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord.

For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD” (1 Samuel 1:26–28). And they worshiped the Lord there.

When a threatening letter was brought to King Hezekiah by the enemies (see 2 Kings 19), he went to the temple “and spread it before the LORD.” God took care of the matter and brought about a speedy deliverance. Later, when the prophet brought the message to the king that he must die, he again sought refuge before God in earnest prayer. His prayer reached God, for God answered him through the prophet Isaiah: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you” (2 Kings 20:5).

Daniel also learned persistent prayer in the land of his captivity. He felt the contempt and shame that rested on his people. He could no longer bear it, but he was also firmly convinced that what he desired was according to the will of God. And we read in Daniel 9:3, “Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” Such prayer reaches heaven.

While Daniel’s heart poured out its sorrow, his words became more and more serious, and he confessed all the sins of his people. Upon this prayer, the command was given from the

throne of God to the angel Gabriel to go to Daniel and comfort him because God had heard him and answered.

We find even more examples in the Bible of people “who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle” (see Hebrews 11:33–34).

These are all examples for us to use as an incentive to continue in prayer and supplication.

Once, when the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to teach them how to pray, He gave them, among other things, the lesson of persistence and perseverance in prayer. This answer applies to all God’s children who wish to learn how to pray successfully and effectively. ■

# The Power of Prayer

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

These few words mean just what they say. Many accounts of answered prayers can be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

Abraham tested the power of prayer. He was a godly man who undoubtedly lived a true life of prayer, and God gave him opportunities to test prayer’s power. He prayed for Abimelech, his wife, and their maidservants, and God healed them.

Moses, the servant of God, prayed for his leprous sister Miriam, and God healed her. “Suddenly Miriam became leprous, as *white as snow*. . . . So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘Please heal her, O God, I pray!’” (Numbers 12:10–13). Leprosy was incurable in most cases, but through the power of prayer it was healed.

Hannah, an afflicted woman, was able to move the God of heaven through her prayer for a son.

Elijah prayed for rain after it hadn’t rained for three years and six months. His prayer was answered, and God gave rain.

Hezekiah, the king of Israel, had his life prolonged by fifteen years as a result of his earnest prayer. Although he was already told that he must die, his tears and prayer move God, so that God told him through the prophet, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years” (Isaiah 38:5).

Daniel and his friends prayed, and the Lord heard so that Daniel could interpret King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (see Daniel 2:17–19).

When Paul prayed in Damascus, Ananias was sent to him, though he refused at first because he knew what an enemy and persecutor of God’s church Paul

had been. But the Lord said to him: “Behold, he is praying” (Acts 9:11). The Lord could no longer close His ear to the earnest pleas, so He sent one of His servants, through whom Paul was given sight and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Through Peter’s earnest prayer, Tabitha was brought back to life (see Acts 9). And in chapter 12 we read how Peter, by the power of prayer, was supernaturally delivered from prison and from the hands of those who wanted to kill him. Neither the chains on his hands, nor the four squads of soldiers, nor the thick walls and strong gates of the prison were able to hinder the power of prayer. “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5). It was not in vain; Peter was set free and escaped the hands of his murderers.

Again, we see the success of prayer when Paul and Silas were in prison. “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earth-

quake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed” (Acts 16:25–26). Nothing can oppose the power of earnest, believing prayer.

As we delve into these wonderful events of the Old and New Covenants, can we still marvel that James exclaims: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16)? As a devout, God-fearing man, he too had led a life of prayer and had experienced many glorious and mighty evidences of the power of prayer.

Shouldn’t we also feel  
compelled today to have a  
closer walk with God and a  
true prayer life?

All these people were like us. Even today, God can still perform miracles and signs. His almighty arm is not too short that He cannot help.

J. D. Hatch, a missionary to Japan, once as a young man found himself in mortal danger on the water. The waves filled his small boat as he ventured a little too far out from shore. He saw death before his eyes and knew that if God did not help, he was lost. In his distress and fear, he cried out to God, and suddenly his boat was on a sandbar that had been invisible to him. This is how he was saved.

Much more could be said about how God still answers prayers today. Shouldn't we also feel compelled today to have a closer walk with God and a true prayer life? Oh, how precious it is to know that at all times we can pray the earnest prayer of faith! The prayer of the righteous is capable of much.

O that there was more fervency among God's people! God would do more by signs and wonders, but the earnest prayer of faith is needed. May the Lord show us that the earnest prayer of the righteous is able to do much!  
*Wilhelm Ebel*



## Obstacles to Prayer

Nothing is more important for the spiritual growth of individual believers, and for the growth and flourishing of the work of Christ, than prayer. Earnestness and diligence are necessary for the cultivation of prayer. We must clearly see and fight against the dangers that exist toward prayer. I would like to draw attention to some of the dangers and obstacles:

A great obstacle to prayer is haste. The Bible says: "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength" (Isaiah 40:31), not those who just hastily glance at Him and then run along. This means that those who take enough time to really become aware of their total dependence on God, will have their human energy transformed into the power of God. We must wait for the Lord. In our hurried and hasty times, we have often lost the sacred art of patient, persistent waiting—of waiting on the Lord. This feverish haste, which is a sign of our times, invades our prayer life and its great enemy.

Another obstacle to the life of prayer is superficiality. Have we not often found ourselves on our knees,

outwardly in prayer, while unaware of the words we were uttering? Such praying is a mere empty form without true value. It is not praying in spirit and in truth. It is dead babbling, against which Jesus warns. True prayer is only that when we are really present with our thoughts, when the heart rises to God. This mere formality, this mechanical externality, where the heart does not speak, is a great danger for our prayer life.

The greatest obstacle to prayer is sin. This cuts the nerve of all prayer. If sin is tolerated in life, there can be no spirit of prayer. The psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18). The sin we tolerate in our lives and the wrong we do are obstacles to the life of prayer.

May the Lord give all His children the earnest desire for a powerful prayer life! If He reveals to us through His Spirit the obstacles that stand in the way of our prayer, may He also give us the strength to remove them, no matter what the cost! ■



## *Power and Results* of Prayer

**W**hy was it necessary for Christ, the Son of God, to pray? He often withdrew from the crowd surrounding Him to a solitary place to pray. He sometimes spent entire nights in prayer. What benefit did He derive?

Jesus prayed often and earnestly. In the letter to the Hebrews, it is written, “In the days of His flesh when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear” (Hebrews 5:7). We know that an angel came from heaven and strengthened Him as He fought through the agony in His soul there in Gethsemane, praying fervently. And it was on this occasion that He gave His

disciples the admonition, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38).

Also, we know that Jesus prayed specifically for Peter, that his faith would not fail (see Luke 22:31–32). In his High Priestly prayer (John 17), the Lord Jesus prayed especially for His disciples and His church. He also prayed for us, for you and me, for it says in John 17:20, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” Oh, how good it is to know that Jesus prayed for all who believe in Him—including you and me! The closer we know the Lord Jesus Christ and the more intimate fellowship we have with Him, the greater will be our appreciation of prayer, and the more we will make use of it.



Why was it necessary for the disciples to set everything else aside and adhere to prayer and the ministry of the Word (see Acts 6:4)? They had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Was that not enough? What was the purpose of their prayers? If they had not prayed so much and so earnestly, would the mighty miracles have taken place among them? Were not these miracles and signs and the powerful work of God's Holy Spirit in saving souls precisely the direct results of their earnest and persistent prayers? Most certainly!

Were not the prayers of the faithful an incentive and a source of

strength for such courageous witnesses of Jesus Christ such as Stephen, who was not afraid to preach Christ fearlessly, even before the enemies of the Lord? Surely it was the prayers of the church that contributed greatly to giving him such tremendous joy until the end. Without a doubt, these prayers contributed much to making his face shine "as the face of an angel."

Who could question that through the earnest prayers of the church the fire of the gospel was kindled and kept burning until the midst of the terrible persecution, when one day around noon divine light entered the heart of one of the most feared persecutors and began to shine brightly, namely in the heart of Saul of Tarsus?

Earnest prayer is a mighty flaming sword in the hands of the Holy Spirit to drive back the evil spirits and to triumph over all satanic powers. We are struggling with the invisible forces of evil. How necessary it is that in the church a constant and uninterrupted stream of prayers rise to God.

Where are the men and women today who earnestly and persistently plead for the anointing of the Holy Spirit so that the church can work in the power of the Spirit and that signs and wonders may be done in the mighty name of Jesus? Is not earnest and fervent prayer one of the most necessary needs of the church today?

We thank God for the prayers of God's children that ascend to His throne. But there should be more earnest prayer warriors who have a burden for lost souls. If all the redeemed earnestly call out to God, results will not be lacking. May God send a revival by which the windows of heaven may be opened so that the blessings of God may flow through the land like a mighty stream and that dear souls may be saved!

We often pity Peter because he did not realize the danger he was in when the Lord Jesus admonished him just before His crucifixion. He did not think it at all possible that he would ever deny his Lord, and yet it happened soon after because he was not watching and praying. We commiserate with the disciples because they could not keep watch there in the Garden of Gethsemane for an hour.

But do we see our own needs today? May God help us to increasingly see the need for earnest prayer! At that time, it was difficult for the disciples of the Lord to realize this. Their example should serve as a warning to us, stirring us up and spurring us on to prayer. God grant us more earnest prayer warriors who persevere in prayer and supplication! Earnest prayer will not remain without effect. A mighty working of the Spirit of God will be the result, so that sinners will begin to look within themselves and exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?" ■



# TRAINING UP Victors NOT VICTIMS

In today's society, we hear a great deal about "victimization," where certain people or groups are targeted through oppressive acts or outright violence. As Christians, we know that it is never right to look down upon others, or to treat others worse than we would want to be treated. That said, we should never use the poor treatment that we receive from others as a justification for our own shortcomings, or an excuse to not be all that God wants us to be or to do all that God wants us to do. Neither should we label others as victims if they don't even see themselves as such. For example, the Israelites in the wilderness labeled their children as future victims, when God had something completely different in store for them.

In Numbers 1: 2–3, we read how God told Moses in the tabernacle of meeting, while encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai, "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above—all who *are able to go to war in Israel.*" Moses and Aaron obeyed and held a census, and verse 46 says, "all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty." The Levites were not included within this number. This census occurred in the second year after their exodus from Egypt. Then approximately 38 years later, we get to chapter 26, where God tells Moses and Aaron's son Eleazar to take another census of the men of Israel from twenty years old and above. And verse 51 says, "These *are* those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty."

We can easily read over these two censuses without thinking much of them, especially since both census totals are nearly the same. But these were not the same 600,000 people. There were only two people counted in both censuses. The Bible says in Numbers 26: 64–65, "But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. For the LORD had said of them, 'They shall surely die in the wilderness.' So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun." Why is it that only Joshua and Caleb were



*“But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.”*

*(Numbers 14: 31)*

numbered in both censuses? What happened to the other men from the first census? They died in the wilderness. When God sent the twelve spies from the twelve tribes of Israel to spy out the land of Canaan, only two came back with a positive report, Caleb and Joshua. The others became fearful of the residents and giants of Canaan and did not believe that God could help them defeat the peoples and conquer their kingdoms. After hearing the negative report, the people of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron saying, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?” (Numbers 14: 2b–3a).

The people of Israel saw the challenges ahead of them and assumed the worst for themselves and their children. They would rather have died in the wilderness, than to walk in faith and trust in God’s deliverance. Therefore, God granted them their desire. They preferred dying in the wilderness, and so God says to the Israelites through Moses in Numbers 14: 29–32, “The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But *as for you*, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.”

How does all of this relate to us today? When we see the increasing godlessness of this world, and the various challenges that Christians face today, we can become greatly discouraged, and even feel like surrendering at times. We begin to fear for our own future and wonder what our children’s future will look like one day when we start a family. All of this neg-

ativity can blind us to God’s presence and make us forget how God has helped His people in the past. The Israelites had witnessed God’s incredible defeat of Pharaoh and his army; surely God’s great power would have been sufficient to defeat the people of Canaan as well. The Israelites didn’t need to worry about their children, because God never changes and would be with them and help them just as He had helped those who escaped Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. We know this to be true because we know how the story continues. All the parents would die in the wilderness, and their children would conquer Canaan. How? Through their faith in God and their obedience to God’s leading.

It’s natural for us to compare ourselves to past generations and see how different the world that they grew up in was, compared to the world we live in now. We might worry about how our future children will navigate their circumstances and the challenges they will face. God’s word reminds us that we don’t need to worry about them, or think of ourselves as victims, because we all have access to the same God who faithfully helps us to live a victorious life for Him. What future generations need are good examples to follow. Even as young people ourselves, we are called to be a good example, and to show those younger than us what it is to know God through Jesus Christ. We can demonstrate how they can start and foster a relationship with Christ, and how they can walk in faith and trust in God’s help and leading, no matter how godless our world becomes. With the Holy Spirit’s filling we can show our peers, and younger generations, how the Spirit empowers God’s children to live holy lives filled with His fruit, equipped with His gifts, and sent into His ministries. We should never see ourselves, or the next generation, as victims of the world’s godlessness, but as potential victors in Jesus Christ.

*David Knelsen  
Hamilton, ON*

## Spread Your Letter Before the Lord!

*It was a threatening letter from the enemy that frightened King Hezekiah and made him flee to the Lord. How would we feel if we received such a letter with a death threat? Indeed, the enemy of our souls also threatens to devour us. But refuge is with the living God!*

**T**he godly king Hezekiah had reached the limit of his abilities and wisdom. The last straw was a letter from Sennacherib, a powerful Assyrian king, who announced that he was coming to lay waste to the streets of Jerusalem, just as he had done in many other cities. Hezekiah knew that his own small army had no chance of successfully defending the city, but he placed his trust in the living God: “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD” (Isaiah 37:14).

Hezekiah knew where to turn when life’s problems became overwhelming. He turned to God in prayer—and what a prayer! He simply laid out the facts as he knew them, then closed his prayer by asking, “Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD, You alone” (verse 20). He wanted God to receive the honor and glory.

God sent His answer through the prophet Isaiah, promising that the king of Assyria would not enter the city. This prophecy was fulfilled in an impressive way: “Then the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh” (verses 36–37). Hezekiah was rewarded for his faith and trust in God. In fact,

all who put their trust in Him can expect the same reward.

Have your enemies encircled you, dear reader? Have you exhausted your own strength and wisdom? Are circumstances conspiring against you? Lay your “letter” out before the One who created heaven and earth. Only He can help. If possible, find your own Isaiah to faithfully join you in prayer. Tell the Lord exactly how things are; He knows already, of course, but it pleases Him to hear it from us. Then, pray to Hezekiah’s God—to your God—and know that He will not reject you.

The reason some people do not get help sooner is that they bring their problems to people instead of to God. Bring your troubles to the One who understands them. Pour your heart out before the One who cares for you more than any other can. Share your troubles with the One who has the power to free you from them. He will never fail you or turn His back on you.

Your letter may be about temptations; bring them to God, and He will give you grace to endure and will set you free at the right time. Your letter may be about loneliness or worry; the Lord will carry this burden for you too. Your letter may be about persecution; do not hesitate to spread it out, not before people but before the Creator of heaven and earth. Whatever your letter is about, bring it to Jesus and lay it at His feet. His heart will be moved to save you.

A. T.

## Why Doesn't God Answer All Prayers?

**A**s a child, Amy Carmichael from England heard in a children's service that God answers all prayers.

"Great," she thought, "that is quite a thing!" In the evening, she lay in bed and thought to herself, "I would so love to have blue eyes!" Amy folded her hands, "Dear God, I have brown eyes. But I wish so much to have blue eyes. God, you answer all prayers; please, make me have blue eyes tomorrow!" She could go to sleep peacefully because she knew that God answers all prayers.

And when she woke up in the morning, of course, her first thought was, "Blue eyes!" Amy got up, put on her slippers, and went to the bathroom. Of course, she was much too short to look in the mirror. So, she pulled up the stool and with difficulty climbed up onto it. But she still couldn't see in the mirror. So, she stood on her tiptoes,

and now she could look in the mirror. And in the mirror she saw . . . two little brown eyes!

"God, I wanted two blue eyes so badly. And the teacher in the children's service said that You answer all prayers. That's not fair!" She had to think for quite a while until she came up with the solution: God had answered her prayer, but He had said "No." And why God said "no" to the blue eyes, she just couldn't understand.

When Amy was an adult, she became a missionary in India. Indians have brown eyes. When Amy dressed as the other Indian women did, with her brown eyes, she looked like one of them, and because of that, she was not only safer but had a much easier time gaining the trust of the people and telling them about Jesus. So it was that many, many years later Amy realized why it was good that God didn't give her blue eyes. ■





# Wayward Children

Part 8

M. Schmelzle

## The Path to Understanding

**T**he path to understanding is long. The son had to learn for himself that the world has nothing to offer. He had gotten mired deep in its mud and was about to go under entirely. Even if his father knew, there would have been little point in going out to look for him. Far from welcoming his help, the son would have accused his father of interfering with his life—and likely not in the kindest of terms. And in the end, the son would still have returned to these sad ways at the next opportunity. So the father had to wait until the son was ready to change; in the meantime, he prayed and hoped and fostered his faith.

Luke 15:15–19: “Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”

Although the son, in his stubbornness and selfishness, continued down the dark path he had chosen, it was not long before his suffering overcame his pride. With his pride broken, he suddenly became

wise. As he began to understand where his path had led him, his hardened heart began to soften, giving way to sincere remorse. We may ask: Do we really need to hit rock bottom to regret the path we have taken? Unfortunately, the answer is often yes. As long as we can still count on our own strength, hope to fix our own problems, and more or less believe it when we tell ourselves, “I can do it,” we like to keep going our own way. Only when our own hope is gone, when we have truly reached the end of our road, do we begin to turn back to God.

After finally making his way to the wider world, the son had soon “wasted his possessions with prodigal living,” and the resulting downward spiral pulled him to previously unimaginable depths. It was bad enough for a Jew to have anything to do with pigs; having to feed them, and then still being so hungry as to envy the pigs of their feed, was even worse. The son was reduced from enjoying lavish spreads with his friends to sitting alone and daydreaming about carob pods, which were only eaten by the poorest of the poor. At that time, eating carob was a sign of utter destitution, but this young man could not even afford that. What a sad position to be in!

A while later, far away from the pig pens, the father sat in front of his house, watching the road as was his habit. All was quiet until his sharp, loving eyes spied movement on the horizon. As the dot

“As long as we can still count on our own strength, and hope to fix our own problems, we like to keep going our own way.”

grew larger, its lines took on a familiar shape. Could it truly be? Or was it a mirage? Were his eyes tricking him into seeing what his heart longed for? As the traveler came closer, he realized—it was true! Finally, finally. His figure dusty, ragged, and unkempt, his face bearing the dual ravages of a dissolute life and utter poverty, he was—the father’s loving heart had no doubt—his beloved, prodigal son! He had returned!

Luke 15: 20–24: “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.”

Having come to understand that he had taken the wrong path in life, the son was deeply humbled and ready to fully accept his father’s direction. He recalled how good the father had always been, not only to him but also to the servants. He remembered a bright and happy home. It had been a good place to live, a place of comfort and security. Would his

father accept him, even after everything? Finally realizing the pain he had caused his father, he could not fully believe it.

Dragging himself along, the son made his way home one step at a time, a broken man. The landscape began looking familiar, and the people did too. They stared, first with revulsion, then in disbelief. Was it really him? The once so arrogant and self-assured young man? Impossible! But it must be him, they whispered to each other, and the boldest added a little louder, “Oh, how the mighty have fallen!” He heard, and it hurt, but he knew it was no less than he deserved.

Then he turned a familiar corner, and his father’s holdings came into view. In the distance was the house he had spent such happy years in. And there! There was someone running. An older man—could it be him? Surely not. Dignified men did not run. (In that time and place, baring your legs was a terrible disgrace: the mark of a servant, not a lord.) But the father did not care. He was not worried about what the neighbors would think; he was not concerned with saving face in front of his employees; he was not acting out of pride or revenge or moral outrage. Mercy drove him, and compassion. And he raced towards his son.

- To be continued -



## Aging Gracefully

PART 3

**G**rowing old brings many changes which vary for everyone. Therefore, it is certainly not advisable to compare oneself with others. Such comparison raises questions and in most cases is not beneficial. Some people are able to stay in their own homes until they die, others move in with their children, while others reside in long-term care facilities and residences for the elderly. But coming to terms with one's fate is often not that easy. However, resisting and fighting against it is not the solution either. Those who refuse to accept the inevitable make life more difficult for their families, and not uncommonly, the family peace fractures. Then everything becomes more complicated than we would have wished.

This article is about the best way to deal with such undesired changes and still live a fulfilled life as a joyful child of God. If we succeed, we can indeed speak of "aging gracefully."

Today I draw on the results of my survey of acquaintances on the subject of "Aging Gracefully" and the responses received. In delving into the replies, I quickly noticed one common thread in almost every answer. People who are preparing for aging have one desire: to spend the last years of their lives as grateful people. They set the goal, regardless of circumstances, to simply be grateful, always, and everywhere. This reminds me of 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything give

thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

It is most pleasant and blessed when people find reasons to give thanks even in their old age. We realize these people live with challenges and limitations that increase day by day.—Can they actually be grateful despite such circumstances?

I visited an elderly sister. Not a word of complaint was spoken, only words of thanksgiving to God. After we had prayed and I was about to say goodbye, my gaze fell on a nice plaque on the wall. I read, "There is always, always, ALWAYS something to be thankful for." Not long ago, I officiated the funeral of this late sister and could show the attendees this framed quote. When it was all over, I inherited the picture. It is in my office as a memory of her but also as a reminder to always find something to be thankful for.

I think of another sister who truly did not have an easy life. She lived in a small apartment on her meager widow's income. Illness and frailty made her life difficult. She was lonely, yet a happy and joyful child of God. Despite her loneliness and hardships, she said, "I have so much to be thankful for that sometimes I don't even get around to making requests." The psalmist also reminds us, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2).

Another sister, who lived in a small one-room apartment in a care facility, emphasized each time I

visited, "I'm so thankful for my little apartment!" And you could sense her genuine joy. How much goodness God has bestowed on us during the course of our lives. Despite the onset of physical ailments and limitations, there are still reasons to be thankful.

I want to be thankful that I am a child of God, thankful for the forgiveness of all my sins, thankful for beautiful songs on a CD, thankful for the sunrise, thankful for the bountiful table, thankful for the friendly caregivers, thankful for the heated apartment, thankful for a comfortable bed, thankful for a piece of cake brought by friends, thankful for a phone call, thankful for an encouraging word, thankful for a friendly smile, thankful for the encouraging and energizing Word of God, thankful for knowledge from the Word that God is with me, thankful for the many promises of God, and much more. If you keep your eyes open and focus on the blessings, you will be thankful.

How do you envision your life in the future? If you don't approach life with a grateful heart today, you will be even more ungrateful in your old age. I want to practice gratitude toward God, my spouse, my children, the church, and the people who help me.

But how do we actually know if we are grateful? I am convinced that probably all of us claim to be grateful. But could we be mistaken? I went to visit someone, and it didn't take me long to realize that I shouldn't have asked the question, "How are you?" I am thankful I am a patient listener. What followed was a long list of negative comments about everything a person could encounter. From the hard mattress, to the cold air

coming through the poorly sealed window, from the unfriendly staff to the unpalatable food. . . . I'll spare you the rest of her complaints. As I was preparing to leave and still wanted to read Scripture, she interrupted me by asking if she could recite a psalm she had memorized. That was fine with me. Out of all of the 150 psalms, she chose Psalm 100. Do you know this psalm? The first few verses were fine, but when she came to verse 4, I silently prayed for a lot of grace. I heard her say, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *and* into

His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name." After all her complaining and grumbling, it seemed to me somewhat incongruent to hear this verse from her of all people. Let it not be held against her.

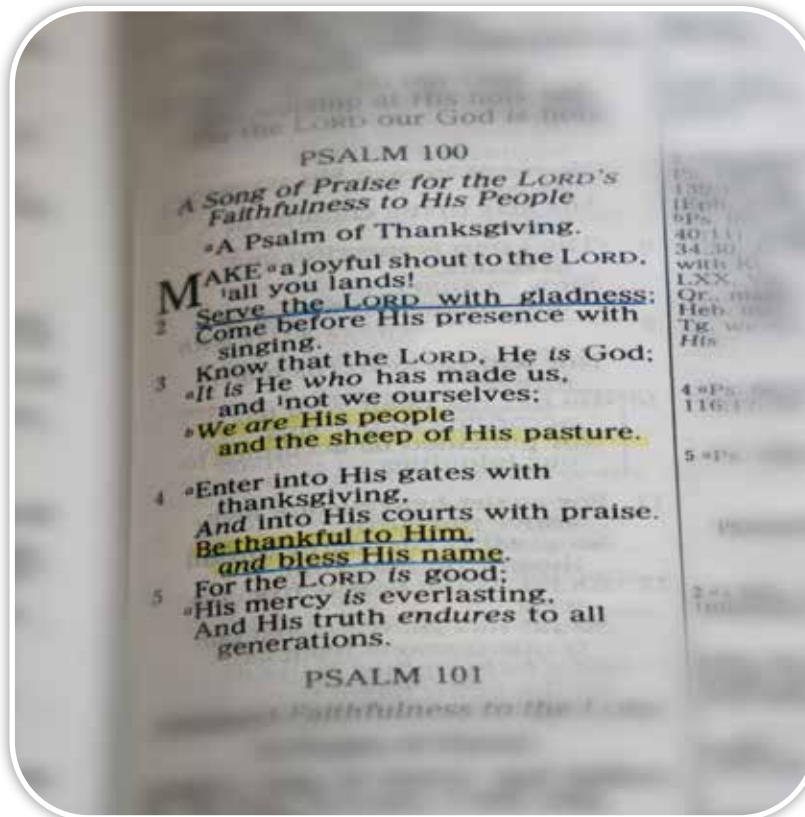
And what about the state of thankfulness in our lives? Will our children and grandchildren be able to remember us as a grateful grandma or grandpa? Does

gratitude or grumbling dominate our lives? Please don't misunderstand; there are situations where you actually need to talk about your circumstances to get help. But it should not be our trademark.

It should also be noted, and you likely have, that grateful people are happy and content people. You feel comfortable in their presence, and it is pleasant to spend time with them.

Let's strive for our lives to be characterized by gratitude not only because we choose to be grateful but because it is God's will.

*Harry Semenjuk*  
-To be continued-



# The Reward of Earnest Prayer

God certainly has had a faithful multitude of worshipers among the nations at all times. If it had not been so, faith and a living relationship with God would have died out long ago. Nevertheless, the modern poet's question is justified: "Where are the prayers of old?" Do we see confident, powerful prayer diminishing among us and possibly being cast aside altogether? In Acts 12:5, we read of the believers at Jerusalem that, "constant prayer was offered to God for [Peter] by the church." And also in Acts 2:42, we read that, "they continued steadfastly . . . in prayers." Oh that we could say the same!

Sincere and earnest prayer is profitable. The Word of God clearly testifies to this. God has placed the greatest promises on earnest prayer, one being: "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

I was once referred to a specialist for my health issues. He quickly identified the cause of my pain and gave me many instructions to follow. Then I cautiously asked him whether prayer could help. Visibly surprised, he looked at me kindly and said, "Prayer always helps!" I thanked him for this answer, and we both rejoiced. It is important to testify to the importance of prayer so that others may be encouraged by it and hold fast to the faith of sincere prayer!

Praying becomes truly rewarding only when we come into the presence of God through it. In this sense, the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Many have experienced how quickly their earnest and faithful prayer was answered.

A former employee of Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, the founder of the Christian welfare institutions in Bethel, recounts the following experience: In one case, the head physician regretfully informed him that a patient could no longer be saved. Then Bodelschwingh asked him the question, "Have you prayed for the salvation of this patient?" The doctor and his assistants smiled pityingly. Bodelschwingh overlooked this and only said, "So no! Then I want to talk to God about this case now!"

For about an hour, he lay on his knees in his room and prayed. He then went back to the patient's room. The nurse immediately welcomed him with the words: "Pastor, since half an hour ago, the patient is suddenly better." After a few weeks, the patient had recovered. Later, during a quiet time, the head physician knocked on Bodelschwingh's door. "Pastor," he said apologetically, "I will certainly never smirk again when you ask for prayer."

We must clarify, however, that earnest prayer and supplication may not lead to such quick and positive results at all times and in all cases. From our point of view, we may have an idea of what is necessary and good, but God knows what is best. He has reserved the right to answer many prayers differently than we would like. Nevertheless, Jesus said: "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

In Psalm 138:3, we read: "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, *and* made me bold *with* strength in my soul." David's requests were not always granted, yet he said, "You answered me." If one answer is not according to our desire, a second one may exceed our expectation. And if God gives "bold strength" to our soul, that is also an answer. We receive strength to accept and be content with what happens according to God's will! He often does it differently, and it took great strength for Jesus, on the way to the cross, to say: "Your will be done." This strength is not from ourselves; it comes from God, and therefore it is an answer.

In Acts 12, we read about earnest and rewarding prayer in the church. In the face of their distress and affliction, they had no other means available to them except prayer alone. There was no other help but from God alone. They could not appeal to King Herod for Peter's release, nor could they avert the threat of serious persecution. Here it depended solely on intervention from God!

Peter was freed; that was the reward of earnest prayer. But the persecutions continued. Yet Acts 4:31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place where



they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” The apostles received a new, great power, “and great grace was upon them all” (verse 33).

Was this not an answer? The external circumstances had not changed, but the congregation experienced an

inner revival, spiritual deepening, and great strengthening of faith and encouragement. That was an answer to earnest prayer!

Therefore, we are exhorted “first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). And the all-wise Lord will know how to reward this. ■

---

## Answered Prayer—Does That Exist?

*Hudson Taylor recounts:*

On a day which I shall never forget, when I was about fifteen years of age, my dear mother being absent from home, I had a holiday, and in the afternoon looked through my father’s library to find some book with which to while away the unoccupied hours. Nothing attracting me, I turned over a little basket of pamphlets, and selected from amongst them a Gospel tract which looked interesting, saying to myself, “There will be a story at the commencement, and a sermon or moral at the close: I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it.”

I sat down to read the little book in an utterly unconcerned state of mind, believing indeed at the time that if there were any salvation it was not for me, and with a distinct intention to put away the tract as soon as it should seem prosy [dull]. I may say that it was not uncommon in those days to call conversion “becoming serious”; and judging by the faces of some of its professors, it appeared to be a very serious matter indeed. Would it not be well if the people of God had always tell-tale faces, evincing the blessings and gladness of salvation so clearly that unconverted people might have to call conversion “becoming joyful” instead of “becoming serious”?

Little did I know at the time what was going on in the heart of my dear mother, seventy or eighty miles away. She rose from the dinner-table that afternoon with an intense yearning for the conversion of her boy, and feeling that—absent from home, and having more leisure than she could otherwise secure—a special op-

portunity was afforded her of pleading with God on my behalf. She went to her room and turned the key in the door, resolved not to leave that spot until her prayers were answered. Hour after hour did that dear mother plead for me, until at length she could pray no longer, but was constrained to praise God for that which His Spirit taught her had already been accomplished—the conversion of her only son.

I in the meantime had been led in the way I have mentioned to take up this little tract, and while reading it was struck with the sentence, “The finished work of CHRIST.” The thought passed through my mind, “Why does the author use this expression? why not say the atoning or propitiatory work of CHRIST?” Immediately the words “It is finished” suggested themselves to my mind. What was finished? And I at once replied, “A full and perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin: the debt was paid by the Substitute; CHRIST died for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Then came the thought, “If the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid, what is there left for me to do?” And with this dawned the joyful conviction, as light was flashed into my soul by the HOLY SPIRIT, that there was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on one’s knees, and accepting this SAVIOUR and His salvation, to praise Him for evermore. Thus while my dear mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book.

*Truly, God hears prayer!* ■

# *The Lord Convicted Me of My Lack of Prayer*

## **Testimony of a missionary in India**

Among the missionaries in India, reports of John Hyde's prayer life became extensive and widespread. An experienced missionary who witnessed how God equipped and used His servant with the spirit of prayer reports:

“For years I labored and became utterly exhausted without seeing any lasting results or promising fruit in my ministry. As I studied Hyde's life—the many hours, even days and nights he spent in prayer—I recognized my spiritual poverty and lack of prayer. This became a great inner need for me. To remain in Jesus and to lead a concentrated prayer life—both seemed almost impossible to me. Though I was serving the Lord, I seemed to know Him so little. Like Job once said, I had heard about Him from hearsay, but despite missionary work, so much about Him was only theory to me.

Hyde's prayer life awakened a longing in me for real fellowship with the Lord, such as I had not known before. My service as a missionary was far from what the Lord had intended for me. I was deeply troubled about my spiritual condition until I finally decided to devote the best hours of the day to prayer. God had spoken to me through His Word: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33: 3). I felt as if He was saying: “You have not called upon Me, and therefore you do not see these ‘things’ in your work!”

I knew that prayer must become the first priority—not second place as before. I stepped down from my ineffective missionary work. Then I made myself

available to the Lord for the most important of all missionary services—the ministry of prayer.

At that point, I had no idea what an inner struggle this decision would cause. I had led an extremely active life all these years. I was always on the move and worked almost tirelessly, while now my daily schedule was completely different. From now on, the “best part” of the day belonged to the Lord Himself.

It was extremely difficult for me to see people going about their work while I remained in my room to pray. The enemy accused me that I was neglecting my duties. I felt like I was “wasting” precious time. I often longed to be more active again. But God did not permit it. His hand held me tightly, and I knew that I could not go on as before.

One day, as I pondered, God seemed to ask me, “What ‘fruit’ has your laborious service produced all these years?”—Oh, how ashamed I was of the many years of ministry I had spent without diligent prayer.

Little by little, I noticed a fundamental change in our mission station. New life everywhere! A seeking and longing for God among the locals increased. Meanwhile, the number of converts rose to about six hundred, up from one hundred people about two years ago.

I must never again, nor do I want to, return to my former ministry, one lacking in diligent prayer. I will always expect greater things from God, even here in India. He promised in Jeremiah 33: 3: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” ■

## “Prayer” and “True Prayer” are Two Different Things

There was a home with many children where the father was the only breadwinner. Often the bread was eaten dry with nothing on it. The little daughter needed some more strength. How good it would be if she had a little butter on her bread! There hadn't been any for a while.

The children took turns praying the Lord's Prayer every morning. This time, it was the little daughter's turn. She prayed, "Give us our daily bread today and butter on it too!" The older children could hardly stifle their laughter. The mother wondered how this was going to turn out.

Then a lady came for a visit. She had little time but sheepishly said, "I brought you some butter." Mother and the older children looked at each other in amazement. The little one, however, said, "The good Lord told you that, right auntie?" "What do you mean?" "I prayed for it today."

The lady admitted that she had wanted to sell the butter, but then had been compelled to bring it here, whereupon the little girl emphasized: "I had prayed after all, and the good Lord answers prayers!"

This experience made a deep impression on the family. What does Jesus say? "Unless you . . . become as little children . . ." Yes, when praying, you must trust like children!

The eleven-year-old daughter of a couple lay seri-

ously ill. After the doctor had given his verdict, it was clear to the parents that the only One who could help here was the One who had once said, "I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). Therefore, they called some brothers from the church to the bedside and proceeded according to James 5:14-16. But there was no improvement. The child whimpered and moaned even more violently after being anointed with oil and the prayer, than before.

With visible uneasiness, the child's father looked at the sick little girl. He knew what the hindrance was. God could not answer the prayer because he did not wish to part with a certain sin.

Then one of those present took the devotional calendar from the wall and read the verse of the day: "Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you" (Joshua 7:12). The father listened as if spellbound, sank to his knees, and cried out to the Lord and vowed to break from his sin from then on.

Now they prayed anew for the child. In His great mercy, the Lord heard the cries of His own. The child recovered completely. No residual damage remained.

Prayer and true prayer are two different things. Sin and insincerity are hindrances (Isaiah 59:2). The way to answered prayer can only be found through honesty and childlike sincerity. ■





# *I Will Pray*

I will pray, and God will hear me,  
For His promises are true.

I will not let doubt come near me;  
What He promised He will do.

If He does not grant my plea,  
He will do what's best for me.

Patiently, I won't grow weary;  
I will pray, and God will hear me.

I will pray, and God will give me  
All that I need from up above.  
His faithfulness will outlive me;  
He sends light and peace and love.

Soul and body, both are fed;  
Thank You for my daily bread.

If I falter, please forgive me;  
I will pray, and God will give me.

I will pray, and God will keep me  
Strong in faith when doubts assail.  
Anxious fears should never reach me,  
For God's love will never fail.

Joy and strength are mine through prayer,  
For His help is always there.

Satan's lies cannot deceive me;  
I will pray, and God will keep me.

I will pray, and God will save me,  
Keep me from all sin and harm.

Sinful things cannot enslave me;  
God extends His mighty arm.

Saved by His amazing grace,  
I will see Him face to face.

May His faithfulness embrace me;  
I will pray, and God will save me.