

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

PRAYER

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. *II Corinthians 12:10*

Practically everyone will confess to having "prayed" from time to time. As someone has said, there is no such thing as an atheist in a foxhole when bombs are falling. When a person has a child or loved one who is sick unto death they will generally pray after a fashion. Just about any time that a person finds themselves in the right jam, they will cry out to GOD.

This is proof of that which Paul said in the book of Romans, "*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*" (Rom 1:19-20) Men cannot escape the facts concerning HIS eternal power and GODHEAD, even though they secretly despise HIS way, therefore Paul goes on to say in that same verse, "*so that they are without excuse.*" The very inclination of men to ask GOD for assistance in times of great trouble, bears witness against them in the day of judgment.

Yet this natural tendency to call upon the LORD for help is very often mistaken for what the scripture speaks of as true prayer. The flesh will gladly embrace the concept of "natural praying" since it is, in a measure, a universal language which is practiced in all of the religions of the flesh. It serves the flesh and salves the conscience. It is very much ingrained in the natural man who is certain that he can converse with GOD whenever HE feels like it or needs something.

Even politicians will call for days of prayer from time to time if circumstances warrant it, especially if they are going after the "conservative" vote and need a little religious fervor on their side. Religious leaders often offer up preplanned flowery speeches which they intone with a certain reverence designed to set the mood and instruct men at the same time. The LORD pointed out such "prayers" when HE confronted the Pharisees. (see Mat.6:5-7) In the same fashion many employ special little phrases which become expected by the hearers of such.

Scientific and statistical studies have been done to determine if people who believe in "prayer" recover from diseases more readily than those who are skeptics. Just like the "power of positive" thinking and other psychological exercises, what men call "prayer" has some calming and useful influence, in the same sense that singing a lullaby to a baby helps them to sleep.

Yet all of this has little or nothing at all to do with the "praying" which the sons of GOD are exhorted to engage in. The "praying" of the flesh is primarily concerned with its own self and the benefits which it can derive from what it believes is a means whereby to influence GOD to grant its wishes in much the same way as Aladdin rubbed his lamp to get the Genie to come out.

True prayer is that which is prompted in a man by the HOLY GHOST. It cannot be turned on and off according to his own will but is the operation of the SPIRIT as HE works in him both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. (see Jude 1:20) True prayer is a genuine blessing without which the sons of GOD are as a ship without a sail or a rudder. "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh*

intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Rom 8:26-27)

True prayer is that which is primarily concerned with the glory of GOD rather than the fulfillment of ones wishes. When the LORD gave HIS disciples HIS model prayer, it began with a sense of worship, *“Our FATHER who art in heaven, hallowed be thy NAME.”* It also ended with the same, *“for THINE is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever.”* (see Mat.6:9-13) True prayer is essentially worship. The Greek word which is most often translated “prayer” in the NT literally means to worship. When we read about Lydia in the book of Acts, it tells us that she gathered with other women *“where prayer was wont to be made”* (Acts 16:13) This means that they gathered in this place to worship GOD together. (see v.14)

True prayer is that which is according to the will of GOD. *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:”* (1John 5:14) The flesh will pray according to its own will (see James 4:3), but the SPIRIT of GOD will use the place of prayer to cause HIS children to be reconciled to the will of GOD. Paul gives us an example of this very operation in his letter to the Corinthians, *“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* (2 Cor 12:8-9)

True prayer is the work of the HOLY GHOST in the sons of GOD to bring them to a state of contentment and trust in HIM. The man who does not pray cannot trust the LORD and vice versa; that man who is taught to trust the LORD cannot help but pray. Paul said *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”* (Phil 4:11) The place he *“learned”* that was the place of prayer.

True prayer is that which is used by the HOLY GHOST to convince men of their own weakness and total dependence on HIM, for it is in the presence of the LORD that they are convinced of their utter unrighteousness and of HIS absolute Holiness. We see this demonstrated in the prayer of the Publican as he cried out with his face towards the ground, *“GOD be merciful to me a sinner.”* This is the same prayer in essence that Peter spoke when he began to sink in the waves, *“LORD save me”*.

The LORD brought both of these men to this place of prayer, designing both the circumstances that brought them there and giving them the gift of faith which caused them to cry out. True prayer is the place where faith is applied. Did not the LORD say, *“My sheep hear my voice”*?

Yet no where in all of the scripture is true prayer demonstrated any more clearly than in Gethsemane’s garden when HE who took upon HIMSELF the likeness of sinful flesh prayed. Never has a more earnest prayer been made, never has a man been brought more perfectly to be reconciled to the will of HIS FATHER. Never has the weakness of the flesh been demonstrated more clearly than here as the ETERNAL SON of GOD is strengthened. *“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”* (Luke 22:42-44)

Some have surmised that HE recoiled at the thought of the crucifixion and desired to be released from it. This is a preposterous idea at best. HE who determined to redeem HIS bride did not shrink from it. Some have opined that HE felt HIMSELF to be so weak at the present moment that HE felt HE might die in the garden if not delivered. This opinion has some credence and is certainly to be preferred above the first notion. Yet the truth as it seems to me is that the duress under which the LORD was wrestling was as HE who knew no sin became sin for us and the sorrows of hell got hold of HIM. The chief desire that HE had was to please HIS FATHER, yet the only way for HIM to please the FATHER, was to become reprehensible in HIS sight as a sin offering. Thus HE prayed, *“nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) mam