

Improve the Precious Privilege

BARNA RESEARCH REPORTS these prayer statistics and says slightly more than four out of five adults in the U.S. (84%) claim they had prayed in the past week. That has been the case since Barna began tracking the frequency of prayer in 1993. A group of physicians used in double-blind “drug” studies of the efficacy of Christian prayer on healing. Patients from the San Francisco General Medical Center were randomly divided into placebo and test groups. Patients in the test group were prayed for by Christians; the placebo group received no prayer. There were no statistical differences between the placebo and the prayer groups before prayer was initiated. The results demonstrated that patients who were prayed for suffered “less congestive heart failure, required less diuretic and antibiotic therapy, had fewer episodes of pneumonia, had fewer cardiac arrests, and were less frequently intubated and ventilated.” {Rich Deem, GodandScience.org}

It is a wonderful thing that we can pray effectually; that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God. What higher power can man desire than this,—to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We may utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We may speak with Jesus as we walk by the way, and He says, I am at thy right hand.

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:2.

God will accept nothing less than unreserved surrender. Halfhearted, sinful, professing Christians would spoil heaven, were they permitted to enter. They would stir

up a second rebellion there. Those who know the truth, yet do not exalt the Author of truth, will never enter the City of God. Heaven would be purgatory to them, because they know nothing of the high, holy principles that govern the members of the royal family above.

The directions that Christ has given are so distinct and so definite that no one need take a false step.... Let us not think that because we have made crooked paths for our feet, every other professing Christian has done the same thing. Let the one who in the past has been a faultfinder begin to climb the ladder heavenward, keeping his eyes fixed on the light above.

The true Christian keeps the windows of the soul open heavenward. He lives in fellowship with Christ. His will is conformed to the will of God.... Shall we not, in the few days of probation that remain to us, act like men and women seeking for life in the kingdom of God, even an eternity of bliss?

We are to strive earnestly to reach the standard set before us. Not as a penance are we to do this, but as the only means of gaining true happiness. The only way to gain peace and joy is to have a living connection with Him who gave His life for us, who died that we might live, and who lives to unite His power with the efforts of those who in this life are striving to overcome.

Holiness is constant agreement with God. Shall we not be that which Christ so greatly desires us to be—Christians in deed and in truth—that the world may see in our lives a revelation of the saving power of truth? This world is our preparatory school, and while here we shall meet with trials and difficulties. But we are safe while we cleave to Him who gave His life as an offering for us....

In the lower school of earth we are to learn the lessons that will prepare us to enter the higher school, where our education will continue under the personal instruction of Christ. Then He will open to us the meaning of His Word. We cannot afford to miss the privilege of seeing His face and of hearing the gospel from His lips. Shall we not put our whole souls into the work of preparing for admission into the higher

school, where we shall see Christ face to face? {Manuscript 61, July 2, 1903}

Christ was not warring against finite men, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places. He tells His hearers that all manner of sin and blasphemy may be forgiven if done in ignorance. In their great blindness they might speak words of insult and derision against the Son of man, and yet be within the boundary of mercy. But when the power and Spirit of God rested upon His messengers, they were on holy ground. To ignore the Spirit of God, to charge it with being the spirit of the devil, placed them in a position where God had no power to reach their souls. No power in any of God's provisions to correct the erring can reach them....

To speak against Christ, charging His work to satanic agencies, and attributing the manifestations of the Spirit to fanaticism, is not of itself a damning sin, but the spirit that leads men to make these assertions places them in a position of stubborn resistance, where they cannot see spiritual light....

They think they are following sound reason, but they are following another leader. They have placed themselves under the control of a power which in their blindness they are wholly ignorant of. They have resisted the only Spirit that could lead them, enlighten them, save them. They are following in the path of guilt for which there can be no forgiveness, in this life or in the life to come. Not that any degree of guilt would exhaust the mercy of God, but because pride and persistent stubbornness leads them to do despite to the Spirit of God, to occupy a place where no manifestation of the Spirit can convince them of their error. They will not yield their stubborn wills.

In this our day men have placed themselves where they are wholly unable to fulfill the conditions of repentance and confession: therefore they cannot find mercy and pardon. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it

is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence. {Manuscript 30, 1890}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. {The Review and Herald, June 29, 1897}

"Come unto Me," is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. {The Desire of Ages, 329}

The Lord gives us the privilege of seeking Him individually in earnest prayer, of unburdening our souls to Him, keeping nothing from Him who has invited us, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, how grateful we should be that Jesus is willing and able to bear all our infirmities and strengthen and heal all our diseases if it will be for our good and for His glory. {Medical Ministry, 16}

Ask, then; ask, and ye shall receive. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith. To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good. {Gospel Workers, 258}

There are few who rightly appreciate or improve the precious privilege of prayer. We should go to Jesus and tell Him all our needs. We may bring Him our little cares and perplexities as well as our greater troubles. Whatever arises to disturb or distress us, we should take it to the Lord in prayer. When we feel that we need the presence of Christ at every step, Satan will have little opportunity to intrude his temptations. It is his studied effort to keep us away from our best and most sympathizing friend. We should make no one our confidant but Jesus. We can safely commune with Him of all that is in our hearts. {Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, 200, 201} ■

