

Lesson 1 —God Invites Us To Pray

LINKED WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER

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. {Pr 7.1}

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. {Pr 7.2}

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. (GW 258.) {Pr 7.3}

JESUS INVITES US TO PRAY

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. (MM, 16.) {Pr 8.1}

"Come unto Me," is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. (DA, 329.) {Pr 8.2}

TELL JESUS ALL YOUR NEEDS

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. (TC, vol. 5, 200, 201.) {Pr 8.3}

OPENING THE HEART TO A FRIEND

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us. (SC, 93.) {Pr 8.5}

GOD WELCOMES US TO HIS AUDIENCE CHAMBER

We come to God by special invitation, and He waits to welcome us to His audience chamber. The first disciples who followed Jesus were not satisfied with a hurried conversation with Him by the way; they said, “Rabbi, . . . where dwellest Thou? . . . They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.” John 1:38, 39. So we may be admitted into closest intimacy and communion with God. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalm 91:1. Let those who desire the blessing of God knock and wait at the door of mercy with firm assurance, saying, For Thou, O Lord, hast said, “Everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” (MB, 131.) {Pr 9.1}

AN EXALTED PRIVILEGE

When in trouble, when assailed by fierce temptations, they [God’s children] have the privilege of prayer. What an exalted privilege! Finite beings, of dust and ashes, admitted through the mediation of Christ, into the audience chamber of the Most High. In such exercises the soul is brought into a sacred nearness with God, and is renewed in knowledge, and true holiness, and fortified against the assaults of the enemy. (ApM, 24.) {Pr 9.2}

PRAYER IS BOTH A SPIRITUAL NECESSITY AND A PRIVILEGE

Those who have professed to love Christ, have not comprehended the relation which exists between them and God, . . . They do not realize what a great privilege and necessity are prayer, repentance, and the doing of the words of Christ. (SM, bk. 1, 134.) {Pr 9.3}

PRAYER ENABLES US TO LIVE IN THE SUNSHINE OF HIS PRESENCE.

It is our privilege to open our hearts, and let the sunshine of Christ’s presence in. My brother, my sister, face the light. Come into actual, personal contact with Christ, that you may exert an influence that is uplifting and reviving. Let your faith be strong and pure and steadfast. Let gratitude to God fill your hearts. When you rise in the morning, kneel at your bedside, and ask

God to give you strength to fulfil the duties of the day, and to meet its temptations. Ask Him to help you to bring into your work Christ's sweetness of character. Ask Him to help you to speak words that will inspire those around you with hope and courage, and draw you nearer to the Savior. (SD, 199.) {Pr 9.4}

OUR PRAYERS NEVER BURDEN OR WEARY GOD.

There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. There is nothing that can prevent us from lifting up our hearts in the spirit of earnest prayer. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance, as did Nehemiah when he made his request before King Artaxerxes. A closet of communion may be found wherever we are. We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul. {Pr 10.1}

Although there may be a tainted, corrupted atmosphere around us, we need not breathe its miasma, but may live in the pure air of heaven. We may close every door to impure imaginings and unholy thoughts by lifting the soul into the presence of God through sincere prayer. Those whose hearts are open to receive the support and blessing of God will walk in a holier atmosphere than that of earth and will have constant communion with heaven. {Pr 10.2}

We need to have more distinct views of Jesus and a fuller comprehension of the value of eternal realities. The beauty of holiness is to fill the hearts of God's children; and that this may be accomplished, we should seek for divine disclosures of heavenly things. {Pr 10.3}

Let the soul be drawn out and upward, that God may grant us a breath of the heavenly atmosphere. We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun. {Pr 10.4}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds. He rules over all the affairs of the universe. {Pr 11.1}

Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. (SC, 99, 100.) {Pr 11.2}

A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

Rest yourself wholly in the hands of Jesus. Contemplate His great love, and while you meditate upon His self-denial, His infinite sacrifice made in our behalf in order that we should believe in Him, your heart will be filled with holy joy, calm peace, and indescribable love. As we talk of Jesus, as we call upon Him in prayer, our confidence that He is our personal, loving Savior will strengthen and His character will appear more and more lovely. . . We may enjoy rich feasts of love, and as we fully believe that we are His by adoption, we may have a foretaste of heaven. Wait upon the Lord in faith.

The Lord draws out the soul in prayer and gives us to feel His precious love. We have a nearness to Him and can hold sweet communion with Him. We obtain distinct views of His tenderness and compassion, and our hearts are broken and melted with contemplation of the love that is given to us. We feel indeed an abiding Christ in the soul. We abide in Him and feel at home with Jesus. The promises flow into the soul. Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us. We have a realizing sense of the love of God, and we rest in His love. {Pr 11.3}

No language can describe it, it is beyond knowledge. We are one with Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God. We have the assurance that when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. With strong confidence, we can call God our Father. Pr 12.1

PRAYER BRINGS FRESHNESS TO SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. (COL, 129, 130.) {Pr 12.2}

A PLACE TO FLEE THAT IS ALWAYS OPEN.

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you. (HP, 86.) {Pr 12.3}

THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL POWER.

Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Wellspring of life and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience.

Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God. The spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor. . . {Pr 12.4}

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. (MYP, 249, 250.) {Pr 13.1}

SECRET PRAYER THE SOUL OF RELIGION.

Do not neglect secret prayer, for it is the soul of religion. With earnest, fervent prayer plead for purity of soul. Plead as earnestly, as eagerly, as you would for your mortal life, were it at stake. Remain before God until unutterable longings are begotten within you for salvation, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin. (2 SG, 264.) {Pr 13.2}

EVERY SINCERE PRAYER IS HEARD.

As yet the disciples were unacquainted with the Savior's unlimited resources and power. He said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name." John 16:24. He explained that the secret of their success would be in asking for strength and grace in His name. He would be present before the Father to make request for them. The prayer of the humble suppliant He presents as His own desire in that soul's behalf. Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and He will present it to the Father without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection. {Pr 13.3}

The path of sincerity and integrity is not a path free from obstruction, but in every difficulty, we are to see a call to prayer. There is no one living who has any power that he has not received from God, and the source whence it comes is open to the weakest human being. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name," said Jesus, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Jn 14:14 {Pr 13.4}

“In My name,” Christ bade His disciples pray. In Christ’s name His followers are to stand before God. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Jn 14:13 Through the value of the sacrifice made for them, they are of value in the Lord’s sight. Because of the imputed righteousness of Christ they are accounted precious. For Christ’s sake the Lord pardons those that fear Him. He does not see in them the vileness of the sinner. He recognizes in them the likeness of His Son, in whom they believe.

LIKE MOSES, WE MAY ENJOY INTIMATE COMMUNION WITH GOD.

That hand that made the world, that holds the mountains in their places, takes this man of dust, this man of mighty faith, and mercifully covers him in a cleft of the rock, while the glory of God and all His goodness pass before him. Can we marvel that the “excellent glory” reflected from Omnipotence shone in the face of Moses with such brightness that the people could not look upon it? The impress of God was upon him, making him appear as one of the shining angels from the throne. {Pr 14.4}

This experience, above all else the assurance that God would hear his prayer, and that the divine presence would attend him, was of more value to Moses as a leader than the learning of Egypt, or all his attainments in military science. No earthly power or skill or learning can supply the place of God’s immediate presence. In the history of Moses we may see what intimate communion with God it is man’s privilege to enjoy. To the transgressor it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But Moses was not afraid to be alone with the Author of that law which had been spoken with such awful grandeur from Mount Sinai; for his soul was in harmony with the will of his Maker. {Pr 15.1}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. The eye of faith will discern God very near, and the suppliant may obtain precious evidence of the divine love and care for him. (GW, 34, 35.)

PRAY WITH HOLY BOLDNESS.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” When you pray, present this promise. It is our privilege to come to Him with holy boldness. As in sincerity we ask Him to let His light shine upon us, He will hear and answer us. (CG, 499.) {Pr 15.3}

Heaven is open to our petitions, and we are invited to come “boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” We are to come in faith, believing that we shall obtain the very things we ask of him. (ST, April 18, 1892.) {Pr 15.4}

ASK FOR OUR NEEDS.

Every promise in the word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer, presenting the pledged word of Jehovah as our assurance. Whatever spiritual blessing we need, it is our privilege to claim through Jesus. We may tell the Lord, with the simplicity of a child, exactly what we need. We may state to Him our temporal matters, asking Him for bread and raiment as well as for the bread of life and the robe of Christ's righteousness. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things, and you are invited to ask Him concerning them. It is through the name of Jesus that every favor is received. God will honor that name and will supply your necessities from the riches of His liberality. (TMB, 133.) {Pr 15.5}

ASK AND BELIEVE.

As you ask the Lord to help you, honor your Savior by believing that you do receive His blessing. All power, all wisdom, are at our command. We have only to ask. {Pr 16.1}

Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible. (MH, 514.) {Pr 16.2}

GO FORWARD, TRUSTING GOD.

We are to encourage in one another that living faith which Christ has made it possible for every believer to have. The work is to be carried forward as the Lord prepares the way. When He brings His people into strait places, then it is their privilege to assemble together for prayer, remembering that all things come of God. Those who have not yet shared in the trying experiences that attend the work in these last days will soon have to pass through scenes that will severely test their confidence in God. It is at the time His people see no way to advance, when the Red Sea is before them and the pursuing army behind, that God bids them: "Go forward." Thus He is working to test their faith. When such experiences come to you, go forward, trusting in Christ. Walk step by step in the path He marks out. Trials will come but go forward. This will give you an experience that will strengthen your faith in God and fit you for truest service. (TC, vol. 9, 273.) {Pr 16.3}