

Devotion on Hymns of the Church (Ere You Left Your Room) – 10 June 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thess 5:6-8, 17-18)

Due to its character as a Gospel Song and not a Hymn, per se, this gentle and devotional piece may have been omitted from the 1940 Hymnal, but it has been used to bolster the faith and prayer life of untold numbers of saints. It reflects the quiet solitude of prayer offered early, while the world sleeps, in both wilderness and crowded street. When we enter our prayer closets, the world fades into oblivion as we are alone with God. That closet may be in the desert, or in a very public place. The prayer may be uttered in the closed chambers of our hearts, and inaudible to the “madding crowd” all about; or it may be reverently uttered behind closed doors in the soft solitude of morning. Regardless the magnitude of the speech, the Lord has good ears to hear.

This Gospel Song was written by Mary A. Kidder of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1876; the beautiful melody was composed by William O. Perkins.

Ere You Left Your Room This Morning

Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you think to pray?
In the name of Christ our Savior,
Did you sue for loving favor,
As a shield today?

Refrain
O how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day;
So when life seems dark and dreary,
Don't forget to pray.

When you met with great temptation,
Did you think to pray?
By His dying love and merit,
Did you claim the Holy Spirit
As your guide and stay? (Refrain)

When your heart was filled with anger,
Did you think to pray?
Did you plead for grace, my brother,
That you might forgive another
Who had crossed your way? (Refrain)

When sore trials came upon you,
Did you think to pray?
When your soul was bowed in sorrow,
Balm of Gilead did you borrow
At the gates of day? (Refrain)

“Ere you left your room this morning, Did you think to pray? In the name of Christ our Savior, Did you sue for loving favor, As a shield today?” What soldier, in the dangers of the battlefield encampment, would dare leave his tent without his weapon and protective armor: what artist would attempt to paint without his brush; what farmer would attempt to sow without his bag of seed; and what Christian would dare face the evils of the world without consulting God at the beginning of each sortie into the world? Our consciousness and duty to God begins at first light, or before. When we open our eyes from sleep, our first thoughts should be of gratitude to the loving God who gave us sleep, and who watches over us as we begin our busy day. A soldier dares not venture forth to battle without first seeking the will of his commander. Once he has gotten it, he engages in his warfare in the name of that commander. No other commander matters – only the one to whom he answers in duty. Can a Christian be less mindful of the Captain and Bishop of his soul than the common soldier on the line of battle? Christ is the One who bled and died for us. It was Christ who bought us with a price – not to be slaves, but free men and women of righteousness. Do we not seek the favor of the Father in the Name of His beloved Son who died for us? Prayer, like the Word of God, is a two edged sword to both protect and to arm for the battles of the day.

“When you met with great temptation, Did you think to pray? By His dying love and merit, Did you claim the Holy Spirit As your guide and stay?” Even the Lord, when tempted of the devil, uttered prayers in the Wilderness – prayers that were echoes of Holy Scripture. When subject to the temptations of my early military career, after falling victim time and again to temptations, I simply undertook the same words of Jesus when Satan tempted Him and when Peter acted as the devil’s go-between: “Get behind me Satan.” Once those words were uttered, I was no longer tempted and found it impossible to give in to sin and temptation on that occasion. If we have the Mind of Christ, how could that Mind fail to seek divine guidance and assurance at the early hours of the morning? In His stead, Christ has sent the Holy Spirit as the Comforter who sustains us in our trials and tribulations. Have you sought that valuable asset at the breaking of the early dawn – and daily? The Word of God is our Chart for navigating the seas of life; and the Holy Ghost is our Compass. Every Seaman must have his chart and compass. The Holy Spirit not only sets the course, but also provides the wind for our sails. He protects and defends.

“When your heart was filled with anger, Did you think to pray? Did you plead for grace, my brother, That you might forgive another Who had crossed your way?” Though there is no sin in righteous anger, there is a sin in anger that is vetted without a cause. Christ demonstrated anger on various occasions. We should be angry at men who dreadfully abuse little children, or who oppress others. Forgiveness is not required for those who seek none. But we often are angry without a cause. Have you ever noticed when someone passes you on a two-lane road how you may have called them fools for driving in such manner; or how often you have passed someone on the same road who you felt was driving too slowly. In both cases, you may have called them ‘fools’ while it was you who was the fool! Instead of “counting to ten” when angered, why not call upon God in prayer. He will never fail you. His gentle grace will soften your heart in ways that counting to arbitrary numbers meaninglessly will not. Any who seek our forgiveness must be granted the same. Not just as a matter of obedience to the commandment, but in obedience to the Holy Spirit that rules our hearts.

“When sore trials came upon you, Did you think to pray? When your soul was bowed in sorrow, Balm of Gilead did you borrow At the gates of day?” Have you remembered, when hard trials come upon you, that there is a Balm in Gilead – the Lord Jesus Christ – whose grace and mercy will ease every pain and heal every ill? The Christians of the poorer regions of Africa and India are familiar with incessant prayer. It is because many, being desperately poor, must appeal to God for the next morsel to fill their own mouths, and the mouths of their children, daily. It is not only a privilege to them, but a dire necessity, to pray. Perhaps our National character would benefit from the deprivation of luxury for a time. When all friends have deserted you, to whom will you turn for succor? There is a Balm in Gilead – remember? He is “a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Why struggle with life’s problems in the early hours of the day before resorting to prayer? Why not pray at the very “Gates of the Day?”

Refrain

“O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day; So when life seems dark and dreary, Don’t forget to pray.” God began the Creation of the world in darkness – the darkness of an unending (until that time) night. But God changed the night to day . . . “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1) When we labor for the Lord, there is no weariness for it is His works and labors that are exerted, and not our own. Why not call upon our Father to move the rock in our sand boxes instead of struggling with a load too heavy for us to bear as His children?

Don’t FORGET to pray! You cannot afford not to.

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