



More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.
Wherefore, let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day.

For what are men better than sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer both for themselves and those who call
them friends?

For so the whole round earth is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Cor 2:9-13)

Prayer is a force often neglected to the detriment of our spiritual health and well-being. If reduced to its simplest denominator, a man who does not pray does not know the salvation of God. Prayer is the purest form of communion with the Lord. An old military principle of the battlefield goes thusly: *Move, Shoot, and Communicate*. This also fairly well summarizes the Christian life. WE must go where God leads us to go whether into the halls of government, the rooms of the hospital, or the jungles of a dark land. We must MOVE according to God's will and plan for our lives. We must also speak truth to those who are in darkness. We bear our living testimonies before all observers. The firepower of a Christian life, well lived, is the artillery of the Spirit. But above all else, we must COMMUNICATE. The absence of the ability to communicate with higher headquarters renders an army unit in the field incapable of knowing the movements of sister units, but also unable to call for coordinating fires. A Christian who ceases to pray loses the fellowship of the Holy Ghost to comfort, guide and direct him in his struggle of life.

The communication of prayer is not unlike an army in the field, or any other endeavor requiring two-way communication. Though God desires to hear from His children, He has far less need to know what we are thinking than we have need to know what HE is thinking! In fact, God knows the burdens of our hearts before we ask: *7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.* (Matt 6:7-8) But God does want to hear the voices of His children raised in prayer just as a father desires to hear his son or daughter ask for some plaything, though he may already have purchased it.³¹ *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* (Matt 6:31-34)

There are many forms and manners of prayer. In worship, we kneel to pray. Why do we kneel in a formal worship service? We kneel as a matter of showing reverence to God. In the worship service of the Reformation Church of England, our prayers are called 'communal' prayers because these are prayers that are included in the Book of Common Prayer with universal application to every supplicant. When individuals pray, they may include supplications of a purely personal matter; but common prayers are those whose supplications are relevant to every single worshipper. A great example of a communal prayer is the Lord's Prayer which is prayed in every service of our church. It does not begin with the pronoun, MY, but 'OUR' Father. We pray this prayer as having application to every worshipper without exception.

There are personal prayers of an extemporaneous nature. These may be long or brief. Personal prayers that are of long duration usually have the effect of comforting those who pray during times of grave sorrow or pain. Such prayers may also be very brief and abrupt. An example of that prayer form is given in Matthew 14:29, 30 and was spoken by the Apostle Peter when the urgency of the moment did not permit a longer prayer. It consisted of three words only: *Lord, save me!* as he began to sink into the depths of the sea.

Most sincere prayers are not overly loud. God is not deaf to hear. We need not scream out our supplications to God as an unruly child. The only purpose public prayers, loudly proclaimed, serve is to allow all in earshot to know of our affected piety in prayer. A very good example of both kinds is found in the Gospel of St. Luke:¹⁰ *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (Luke 18:10-14) God will prefer the greater humility in prayer to that pretentious one offered up by the Pharisee.

There are, too, silent prayers offered in times of personal want and pleading. An excellent example of the silent prayer is found in I Samuel and was offered by Hannah in her petition for God to grant her a son: *9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. 11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid*

a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. (1 Sam 1:9-17)

One of the greatest transgressions in the rule of prayer is to plead our wills above that of our Lord. It should always be HIS will we seek to be done - for His will is always better for us than our own. *Thy will be done!* Another misconception we may harbor concerning prayer is the belief that we cannot pray while standing, sitting, or driving an automobile – or that we must pray aloud! We can utter a prayer when we see that we may be in grave danger. God can hear the prayer even if we do not utter it audibly. In fact, our very lives should be a prayer acted out in the will of God our Father. We are to pray ALWAYS! *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* (Luke 21:36)

Let us look briefly at the Lord's Prayer which He gave us to pray: *After this manner therefore pray ye:*

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matt 6:9-13)

Please carefully note the elements of this prayer. First, observe to whom it is, as a letter, addressed: *OUR Father* – not MY Father. It is thus intended to be prayer in communal worship as well as in the privacy of one's closet. Next, see the address to whom the prayer is sent: *which art in Heaven*. Every letter must have a salutation, and this prayer is no exception: *Hallowed be thy name*. Then comes the body of the letter of our prayer: *Thy kingdom come*. Many today are fearful of the signs of the times. It is as if they dread the return of our Lord (and some with good reason). We must look longingly for the return of our Lord to set all things right.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. If we have *put on the Mind that is in Christ* We should do His will on earth, and convince others to do the same. This prayer only seeks one material benefit: *Give us this day our daily bread*. There is no pretentious petition for fine clothes, jewelry, money, or porsches – just our daily bread. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*. We have no right to ask God to forgive the sins that we do not forgive in our brethren. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. God never will tempt us, but He can watch over those who are prayerful to avoid temptation; and He can surely deliver us from evil. Though evil may come, God will give us power to overcome it. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*. Every cordial letter should include a benediction and a closing. We have these in the final line of the Lord's Prayer as seen above.

Prayer is a subject that may cover many volumes, but the simple cry of the righteous should suffice.