



Third Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may, by thy mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Before our prayers are answered, they must be heard and recorded in Heaven. Prayers that fall short of the will of God, or which are offered out of a heart that harbors sinful inclinations. So, the opening line pleads for the hearing of our prayers by God Almighty. God hears our prayers, precisely as the Collect says, out of mercy and not some presumed constraint. There are churches today who have opted for the heresies of ancient days in teaching that God has no choice but to hear and grant our prayer requests. Who is Sovereign, God or Man? I may upset the comfort of many in declaring my belief that there is more error taught in the modern church than truth. It is no wonder that our nation and people have sunk to their lowest moral point in history while churches teach that adultery, homosexuality, lukewarm obedience and a laxity of worship is acceptable so long as the treasury of the church offering pot is filled.

There are churches here in Alabama which note seven or eight different categories of offering on the Offering Envelope. If one or two boxes are not checked, the pastor makes public notice of it. There are special secular holidays, such as New Years Eve, at which the preacher prays for all the children of the church. These young innocents line up to be blessed by the pastor holding an envelope containing an offering clearly stated on the outside as to amount. If the amount is handsome, the prayer and blessing seems to be more intense and of greater duration. May I ask the difference between this principle and that of Roman indulgences which spurred the great Reformer, Martin Luther, to flee to Protestantism? Our first prayer should always be that our lives and actions reflect the character from which God may hear our prayers: *O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us.*

" . . . *grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray.*" Our petitions will be more in line with God's will to grant is our prayers emerge from a hearty desire to pray. Are your prayers and desires to pray hearty? Do you pray at first and last light of day? Is your life a perpetual attitude of prayer? Prayer is a privilege at least as much as a duty. If we pray out of obligation only, our prayers are not offered in the proper spirit. People often petition to meet their Senator or Congressman to redress some trivial human grievance. They may wait days or weeks before the meeting is granted, and then the request may be given lip service only. But no one must wait in line to make their petitions known to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What a

privilege to have the veil of separation in the Temple ripped from top to bottom so that all men may come on equal footing for their personal prayers to a Holy God. How can we neglect so great a privilege! Having so much greater vision than we have - in fact, perfect vision - God will even edit our requests so that a greater good to us will result from that for which we, at first, asked. We are children lacking a wider knowledge of the science of life, but God knows and answers our prayers accordingly.

". . . *may, by thy mighty aid, be defended.*" God is truly our ONLY defense. That defense is reserved in greater measure for those who are minded to pray. Though God may not send mighty acts of nature to destroy a wicked people, He is inclined to defend His people from the effects of such cataclysmic events. Our youth in the public school system are not afforded the privilege of prayer to which I was exposed as a child. Therefore, evil and wickedness have a welcome door and access to our youth of America. God bless those parents who are able to home-school their children.

Not only are we defended, in our prayers, from many dangers, toils and snares, but we are comforted therein as well. ". . . *and comforted in all dangers and adversities.*" This principle is confirmed over and over in Holy Scripture. It has even been confirmed in my own life. It is not the case that God has spared me from very trying and difficult situations, but He has comforted and defended me therein. I have experienced a sense of ease even when those whose duty it is to render medical treatment are near panic. I do not wish to leave this world not knowing if my family is well, but I do not either fear death. It took me a while to develop that level of comfort in God, but, having it, I am relieved of many tensions and stresses. This last phrase of the Collect was appropriately added by the Prayer Book revisers of 1662, for it is not only a defense that we are granted, but a comfort and peace of mind under all circumstances.

My favorite minister of the modern era is the Rev Adrian Rogers - a Baptist. Several years ago, Adrian (now deceased) made a comment that got him in immediate hot water. He was the President of the Southern Baptist Convention when he said: "All prayer must be offered in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the prayers of the Jews are not heard." Though his remark was absolutely consistent with the very words of Christ, he was ridiculed and condemned widely, even among his own churchmen, for making the statement. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* (John 14:13-14) This is not a license to ask anything we WANT, but we may ask anything CHRIST wants for our lives if we ask it under His Name and Authority! When you offer your prayers, do you do so out of an earnest determination to ask only those things that are satisfying to God and out of a knowledge of His Holy Word? If not, why do we pray: "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" (Matt 6:10)?