

Devotion on the Collect for the Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity Sunday - 11
November 2012, Anno Domini



The Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity
The Collect.

O GOD, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness; Be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. 5. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. (Psalms 46:1-5)

The inspirational power of this COLLECT is best represented in the five verses above taken from the 46th Psalm, and also from that great Reformation Hymn by Luther; *A Mighty Fortress is our God*. The consistent testimony of faith is demonstrated between the Psalmist of old and the latter-day Reformer in observing these two works. The Ramparts of God are sound and strong and not subject to penetration. In fact the bulwark and rampart are the early strong defense built outside and beyond the walls of the fortress as an early defense

against the enemy. Isn't that early defense precisely what we need most in defending our souls against the wiles of the devil? If we spare our defense until the enemy is ramming the gates of the fortress, have we not taken the chance of waiting too late to defend the soul within the fortress? When we open our hearts to risky temptation, have we not disregarded that early defense that God offers? If we never allow the enemy to draw near enough the Fortress of our Souls as to seduce us with enfiling maneuvers, we shall bear a far greater security than by depending upon our own desultory fires of defense from a weakened position. This COLLECT calls to our remembrance the continual security we may enjoy in God by living prayerful faith and living.

Prayer is, to the Fortress of the Church, the same as the communications and intelligence resource of an Army. Through prayer, we call in the power of God on the enemy lines, and also reveal to Him our present position. Our logistical needs and provisions are conveyed by prayer, and we await the response from that Higher Headquarters as to its supply. If the Church is true to God, it will be a Fortress in a world of wickedness. Please observe how small is a Fortress as contrasted with the world for size. Those who seek safety will run to the fortress as danger approaches. Those who seek only to spoil and plunder will also run to the fortress to gain entrance by force of fire and intrigue. God is a SURE defense against every evil seduction. When we depart from the security of constant prayer, we are defenseless before the enemy. Jesus says: *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 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 21:33-36) Pray ALWAYS! How is that possible? Jesus means that not only with our lips, but with our lives, we must pray. Our living testimony is lie unto a prayer. We seek the will of God for all that we do – that is an ALWAYS prayer for the Christian.

O GOD, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness Yes, God is our refuge and strength, but also the author of 'godliness' or righteousness. All that God has every said, thought, or done has been altogether righteous and just. We sometimes must remind ourselves that God's justice makes no distinction of persons. But there is an apparent exception to this rule (and it is apparent ONLY): those sinners whose condemnation is given over to Christ through their election and calling in Him are forgiven and exonerated of their sins. But what, may you ask, of the justice of God? It holds sure and constant, for God has allowed His son to receive that judgment that was due to us through His redemptive sacrifice at Calvary.

Be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church It is a certain thing that God is ALWAYS ready to hear the prayers of the devout. Prayers offered in Communion of the Church are multiplied in their earnestness by the numbers of devout souls praying. If the whole Church pleads a case with God, it is all the more likely that the petition will be one which the Lord is

disposed to grant. It is a simply thing for the Christian to pray alone and in the privacy of his closet, but how much more convincing of righteousness when the whole Church comes together in prayer for the common need. God is very pleased to hear those prayers of the Church and to grant them favor.

Grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually It is possible to pray with great faith for a blessing which it is not the Lord's will to grant. How is this possible? Because we see, now, through a glass darkly, and do not know what danger may await at the end of the road which we pray to follow. God does know, indeed, and may forbid our travel on that road (plan). But praying faithfully for those things which are clearly righteous and God's desire to grant will result in answered prayer in the grant of our request. Once prayer has been answered according to our will, AND the will of God, we must receive the grant effectually. If we have suffered great financial hardship and pray our father for a gift of cash to cover our hardship, how wrong of us to take that gift and squander on the cheap treasures of the world! When God answers our prayers, we must act with sincerity and devotion upon the favor granted. That is obtaining effectually. We must use His gifts precisely in accordance with the will of the grantor.

Finally, all that we ask of God, we ask through, and on the behalf, of the One who bought us with His own blood – the Lord Jesus Christ. If even Christ Himself prayed that not His will, but the Father's, be done, how much more should we pray in the same spirit? Do you always make your prayers subject to the will of God the Father?