

52. Prayer

“MORE things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

WHY WONDER

“If radio’s slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night-and toss it over a continent or sea;

“If the petaled white notes of a violin
Are blown across the mountains or the city’s din;

“If songs, like crimson roses, are culled from thin blue air-
Why should mortals wonder if God hears prayer?”
-Ethel Romig Fuller.

SELECTED REFERENCES

SC 97-109; MB 187-191; COL 139-149; [4] Pages 17-53; [5] Pages 127-176; [6] Pages 59-69; 103-113.

Memorize: Matthew 6:6.

A. A VITAL NECESSITY.

Luke 21:35, 36; Colossians 4:2; Philippians 4:6; Luke 6:12.

“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.” - GW 254, 255. “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend!” - SC 97. “Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence.” - SC 99. “Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life, and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God.” - SC 102. “Prayer is a necessity; for it is the life of the soul. Family prayer, public prayer, have their place; but it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life.” - Ed 258.

“At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan’s whole host trembles.” - 1T 346. “Prayer unites us with one another and with God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan.” - COL 250.

“And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

B. “LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.”

Matthew 6:9-13; Romans 8:26.

“It was from hours spent with God that He [Jesus] came forth, morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. The disciples had come to connect His hours of prayer with the power of His words and works. Now, as they listened to His supplication, their hearts were awed and humbled. As He ceased praying, it was with a conviction of their own deep need that they exclaimed, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” - MB 152.

C. THE MODEL PRAYER.

1. “Our Father.”

1 “Jesus teaches us to call His Father our Father. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. . . . Here is the announcement of that wonderful truth, so full of encouragement and comfort, that God loves us as He loves His Son.” - MB 154.

“If you call God your Father, you acknowledge yourselves His children, to be guided by His wisdom, and to be obedient in all things, knowing that His love is changeless. You will accept His plan for your life. As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as the objects of your highest interest. . . . You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory, or

to the well-being of your kindred.” - MB 156.

2. “Hallowed be Thy name.”

“When you pray, ‘Hallowed be Thy name,’ you ask that it may be hallowed in this world, hallowed in you. . . . In every act of life you are to make manifest the name of God. This petition calls upon you to possess His character. You cannot hallow His name, you cannot represent Him to the world, unless in life and character you represent the very life and character of God. This you can do only through the acceptance of the grace and righteousness of Christ.” - MB 158.

3. “Thy kingdom come.”

“The kingdom of God’s grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love. But . . . His kingdom [of glory] will not come until the good tidings of His grace have been carried to all the earth. Hence, as we give ourselves to God, and win other souls to Him, we hasten the coming of His kingdom. Only those who devote themselves to His service, saying, ‘Here am I; send me,’ to open blind eyes, to turn men ‘from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified. They alone pray in sincerity, ‘Thy kingdom come.’” - MB 159, 160.

4. “Thy will be done.”

“The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven. . . . The petition, ‘Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,’ is a prayer that the reign of evil on this earth may be ended, that sin may be forever destroyed, and the kingdom of righteousness be established.” - MB 161.

5. “Give us ... our daily bread.”

“When you have . . . made God’s service your first interest, you may ask with confidence that your own needs may be supplied.” - MB 162.

“The prayer for daily bread includes not only food to sustain the body, but that spiritual bread which will nourish the soul unto life everlasting. . . . We are to pray day by day that as we read His word, God will send His Spirit to reveal to us the truth that will strengthen our souls for the day’s need.” - MB 164, 165.

6. “Forgive us our sins.”

“Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love cannot touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren. . . . It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.” - MB 166.

“We must accept God’s estimate of sin, and that is heavy indeed. Calvary alone can reveal the terrible enormity of sin. If we had to bear our own guilt, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place; though undeserving, He has borne our iniquity.” - MB 169.

7. “Lead us not into temptation.”

“Temptation is enticement to sin, and this does not proceed from God, but from Satan, and from the evil of our own hearts. ‘God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempted no man.’ (James 1:13, A. R. V.).

“God, in His great love, is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience, and advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation, reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ.

“But while we are not to be dismayed by trial, bitter though it be, we should pray that God will not permit us to be brought where we shall be drawn away by the desires of our own evil hearts. In offering the prayer that Christ has given, we surrender ourselves to the guidance of God, asking Him to lead us in safe paths. We cannot offer this prayer in sincerity, and yet decide to walk in any way of our own choosing. . . .

“The only safeguard against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. It is because selfishness exists in our hearts that temptation has power over us. . . . Christ

will never abandon the soul for whom He has died.” - MB 170-172.

8. “Yours is the kingdom.”

“The last like the first sentence of the Lord’s prayer, points to our Father as above all power and authority and, every name that is named. . . . In the prayer that breathes their daily wants, the disciples of Christ were directed to look above all the power and dominion of evil, unto the Lord their God, whose kingdom rules over all, and who is their Father and everlasting Friend.” - MB 174, 175.

D. CONDITIONS OF ANSWERED PRAYER.

Psalm 66:18,20; Jude 20, 21. Matthew 7:7,8; 26:37-42.

1. Our need.

“There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers. One of the first of these is that we feel our need of help from Him. He has promised, ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.’ Isaiah 44:1 Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who long after God, may be sure that they will be filled. The heart must be open to the Spirit’s influence, or God’s blessing cannot be received. Our great need is itself an argument, and pleads most eloquently in our behalf. But the Lord is to be sought unto to do these things for us.” - SC 99.

2. Wrongs righted.

“If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions. Our own merit will never commend us to the favor of God; it is the worthiness of Jesus that will save us, His blood that will cleanse us; yet we have a work to do in complying with the conditions of acceptance.” - SC 99, 100.

3. Spirit of forgiveness.

“When we come to ask mercy and blessing from God, we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts. How can we pray, ‘Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,’ and yet indulge an unforgiving spirit? If we expect our own prayers to be heard, we must forgive others in the same manner, and to the same extent, as we hope to be forgiven.” - SC 101.

4. Faith.

“Another element of prevailing prayer is faith. ‘He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’ Hebrews 11:6. Jesus said to His disciples, ‘What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.’ Mark 11:24. Do we take Him at His word . . .

“If we take counsel with our doubts and fears, or try to solve everything that we cannot see clearly, before we have faith, perplexities will only increase and deepen. But if we come to God, feeling helpless and dependent, as we really are, and in humble, trusting faith make known our wants to Him whose knowledge is infinite, who sees everything in creation, and who governs everything by His will and word, He can and will attend to our cry, and will let light shine into our hearts.” - SC 100, 101.

5. Diligence.

“The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching, we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation.” - SC 98, 99.

6. Perseverance.

“Perseverance in prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always, if we would grow in faith and experience. We are to be ‘instant in prayer,’ to ‘continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.’ Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2. Peter exhorts believers to be ‘sober, and watch unto prayer.’ 1 Peter 4:7” - SC 101, 102.

7. In His name.

“To pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works.” - SC 105.

“Pray, yes, pray with unshaken faith and trust. The Angel of the Covenant, even our Lord Jesus Christ, is the mediator who secures the acceptance of the prayers of His believing ones.” - 8T 179.

E. PRAYER FOR THE SICK.

James 5:14-16; Isaiah 38:1-3,21.

“It is our privilege to pray with the sick, to help them to grasp the cord of faith. Angels of God are very near to those who thus minister to suffering humanity.” - GW 213.

“It is our work to present the sick and suffering to God in the arms of our faith. . . . Through faith and prayer the sickroom may be transformed into a Bethel.” - MH 226.

Often cases will permit, and patients will welcome, a few moments daily given to devotional reading and prayer. A missionary nurse never fails to see and improve these opportunities. Good judgment should be exercised, however, and care taken not to bore or tire the patient. If there is any question, it would be best to ask the physician, as in other things. But great good comes to the soul, and lasting memories remain, when a compassionate, devoted Christian nurse kneels beside her patient, and in the spirit of the Master commits the case to the Great Physician.

(For a full study of special prayer for the sick, as we are instructed in the text, see MH 225-233, GW 213-221, CH 373-382.)

F. PUBLIC PRAYER.

Matthew 6:7, 8; 2 Chronicles 6:12, 14; 7:12-14.

“The prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. God does not require us to make the season of worship tedious by lengthy petitions. Christ did not enforce upon His disciples wearisome ceremonies and long prayers.” - GW 175.

“When you pray, be brief; come right to the point. Do not preach the Lord a sermon in your long prayers.” - 5T 201.

“Let them lift up their heads, and with holy awe speak to their heavenly Father, uttering their words in tones that can be heard.” - 6T 381.

G. SECRET PRAYER.

Matthew 6:6; James 5:16-20; Psalm 141:2; 34:6.

“Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. . . . By calm, simple faith the soul holds communion with God, and gathers to itself rays of divine light to sustain and strengthen it in the conflict with Satan. . . . Pray in your closet; and as you go about your daily labor, let your heart be often uplifted to God.” - SC 102, 103.

“We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. . . . 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.” - GW 258.

“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.” - IT 163.

“God will hear the prayer of the contrite heart; He says He will, and what better assurance can you desire than the word of God? Your weakness and sinfulness are all known to Him. While you cannot rejoice over this, you may rejoice that Jesus is your righteousness. Your very weakness may make manifest His grace and power; for your conscious weakness drives you to Him who is willing and mighty to help when you lay hold upon Him by prevailing prayer.”-Ellen G. White, in *The Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884.

“Prayer is not intended to work any change in God; it brings us into harmony with God. It does not take the place of duty. Prayer offered ever so often and ever so earnestly will never be accepted by God in the place of our tithes. Prayer will not pay our debts to God.”-Ellen G. White, in *Youth’s Instructor*, Aug. 18, 1898.

“The strength acquired in prayer to God will prepare us for our daily duties. The temptations to which we are daily exposed make prayer a necessity. In order that we may be kept by the power of God through faith, the desires of the mind should be continually ascending in silent prayer.” - Ibid.

KEY TEXTS

Matthew 6:9-13 James 5:16, 20 Philippians 4:6
Matthew 26:39, 41 Psalm 66:18,19 Romans 8:26

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What facts indicate the importance of prayer to the soul life?
2. What conditions of answered prayer are illustrated in the model prayer?
3. Does God suspend natural law to answer prayer?
4. When is prayer an abomination?
5. How may secret prayer be made most effectual?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. What examples of praying did the Master give us?
2. What promises are given to the one who prays?
3. What are the chief recorded prayers of Scripture?
4. What is the preferred attitude in prayer? Why?
5. Through what agencies are our prayers carried to the throne of God?