Men Ought Always To Pray

By J. C. McPheeters

Jesus said: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). The disciples of Jesus were profoundly impressed with his prayer life. While beholding his prayer life they stood in the presence of a mystery which they could not fathom. They recognized a vital relationship of his prayer life to all of the remarkable things which he said and did. Prayer was a fixed habit and attitude in the life of Jesus; as fixed as the habit of breathing in sustaining the physical life of the body.

TEACH US TO PRAY

The prayer life of Jesus convicted his disciples of their impoverishment in prayer. It was following one of the periods of prayer, in which Jesus was frequently engaged, that his disciples requested him to teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). The only specific teaching request made by the disciples, of which we have a record, was concerning prayer. The request indicates that they had come to regard prayer as paramount, vital, and indispensable to Christian character and achievement. The disciples were correct in their interpretation concerning the significance of prayer. We will do well to emulate their example in this regard.

"WHEN YE PRAY"

Jesus responded to the request of his disciples by giving them certain fundamental procedures in prayer. The laboratory secrets of prayer are as real, genuine, and dependable as the laboratory secrets of nuclear energy. Jesus revealed the laboratory secrets of prayer in a pattern prayer. Jesus responded to their request by saying: "When ye pray" certain fundamental procedures are to be observed. If these procedures are not observed, prayer becomes "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."
Prayer is going alone with God for a spiritual inventory. Jesus said: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret; and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). Frequent inventories are essential for any successful business. Spiritual inventories are even more essential for our lives. Without the spiritual inventory of prayer life cannot have proper direction. Only the x-ray can reveal certain physical conditions in our bodies. Only by going alone in prayer can certain spiritual perspectives be reached.

"OUR FATHER"

Jesus said: "After this manner therefore pray ye: our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). Prayer, in its primary aspect, is a recognition of deity. In prayer we bow to the sovereign of the universe. David begins his prayer of praise and exaltation of the Lord, in the 8th Psalm, with these words: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens." The exaltation of the sovereign of the universe in prayer is retroactive upon the man who prays. In the exaltation of God he lifts his own soul to a higher spiritual level.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus taught that the over-all arching purpose of prayer is to bring in the kingdom of God. Prayer should not be personal centered but kingdom centered. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Many think of prayer as other-worldly. But Jesus taught that the objectives of prayer are in this world. This world is to be changed and transformed through prayer. We are to seek the will of God in all the relationships of life, even as his will is done in heaven.

DAILY BREAD

Prayer has a vital relationship to our daily living, even to our daily bread. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). In prayer we recognize God as the source of all material blessings. "He sends the sunshine and the rain." He gives
the seasons. We are dependent upon the good providences of God. Without the continuation of these providences, we perish. It is ingratitude on the part of man to fail to recognize these providences in prayer.

"FORGIVE US"

Prayer is a recognition of our sinfulness and our need of forgiveness: "Forgive us our sins" (Luke 11:4). Men who do not pray, by their prayerlessness, proclaim a self-righteousness which is not real and genuine. In prayer we confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness. All men stand in need of prayer, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

TEMPTATION

Prayer is a fortification against temptation. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). Temptation is not an imaginary delusion. It is one of the stern facts with which life is confronted. Moral law cannot be kept without a battle. The adversary of righteousness contests every foot of the highway of moral law. The wrecked civilizations and empires of the past stand as a tragic testimony to the futility of man's strength to meet the temptations of life. Only as men pray and seek a source of strength beyond that which is human can the temptations of life be met.

GOD'S MAGNIFICENCE

Prayer is an exaltation of God's magnificence and glory. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:13). All glory, power, and dominion belong unto God, the creator of the heavens and of the earth. And yet, in all of his magnificent glory, God has been mindful of sinful men. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psa. 8:3-5). The recognition which God has given to man is a high claim for the exaltation of God's magnificence and glory in prayer.

Prayer changes things. Prayer changes you You can do
nothing but pray until you have prayed; but after you have prayed, you can do more than pray.

"Lord, teach us to pray."