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Prayer

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CHAPTER XII

Prayer

PRAY EVERY DAY. Observe that great commandment given of the Master, always to remember the Lord, to pray in the morning, and in the evening, and always remember to thank him for the blessings that they receive day by day.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1914, p. 6.

PRAY IN WISDOM. My brethren and sisters, let us remember and call upon God and implore his blessings and his favor upon us. Let us do it nevertheless in wisdom and in righteousness, and when we pray we should call upon him in a consistent and reasonable way. We should not ask the Lord for that which is unnecessary or which would not be beneficial to us. We should ask for that which we need, and we should ask in faith, "nothing wavering, for he that wavereth," as the apostle said, "is like the wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." But when we ask of God for blessings let us ask in the faith of the gospel, in that faith that he has promised to give to them who believe in him and obey his commandments.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1914, p. 7.

KEEP THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER. We should carry with us the spirit of prayer throughout every duty that we have to perform in life. Why should we? One of the simple reasons that appeals to my mind with great force is that man is so utterly dependent upon God! How helpless we are without him; how little can we do without his merciful providence in our behalf! I have often been led to make the remark, that not one of us, not a human being in all the world can make even a single spear of grass grow without the help of God. We have to use his earth, we must avail ourselves of the benefit of his soil, his air and his sunshine, and the moisture that God provides and gives to the earth, to enable us to pro-

duce even a single blade of grass; and the same applies to everything that ministers to our existence in the world. You can't raise an ear of corn or grain of wheat without God's help. You cannot produce a single thing essential to the existence of man or beast without the help of God. Then, why should we not feel dependent upon the Lord? Why should we not call upon his name? Why should we not remember him in our prayers? Why should we not love him with all our heart and mind, and strength, since he has given us life, since he has formed us in his own likeness and image, since he has placed us here that we may become like unto his Only Begotten Son and to inherit the glory, exaltation and reward provided for God's own children?—*Oct. C. R.*, 1914, p. 6.

TRUE PRAYER. I pray you, my young brethren who are present in this vast congregation, and who are liable to be called to preach the gospel to the world, when you are called to go out, I pray that you will know how to approach God in prayer. It is not such a difficult thing to learn how to pray. It is not the words we use particularly that constitute prayer. Prayer does not consist of words, altogether. True, faithful, earnest prayer consists more in the feeling that rises from the heart and from the inward desire of our spirits to supplicate the Lord in humility and in faith, that we may receive his blessings. It matters not how simple the words may be, if our desires are genuine and we come before the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit to ask him for that which we need. I would like to know if there is a young man in this congregation, or anywhere else, who does not need something of the Lord. Where is there a soul upon the earth that does not need something that the Almighty can give. In the first place, all that we have comes from him. It is by his providence that we exist on the earth. It is by his kind mercy that we see and hear, that we have the power of speech, and that we possess intelligence, for as the sage of old said, "There is a spirit in man: and

the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Therefore, the very power of understanding that we possess is the gift of God. In and of ourselves we are but a lifeless lump of clay. Life, intelligence, wisdom, judgment, power to reason, all are the gifts of God to the children of men. He gives us our physical strength as well as our mental powers. Every young man should feel from the depth of his heart that he is indebted to Almighty God for his being and for every attribute that he possesses which is in likeness of the attributes of God. We should seek to magnify the attributes that we possess. We should honor God with our intelligence, with our strength, with our understanding, with our wisdom, and with all the power that we possess. We should seek to do good in the world. This is our duty; and if a young man can only feel as all men should feel, he will find that it is an easy matter for him to bow down before the Lord in humble prayer and seek unto God for the aid, comfort, and inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that he may not be left entirely to himself, nor to the wisdom and ways of the world. But as a rule, where young men have good parents to provide for them, where they have good homes and their food and raiment are sure, they feel that they are not dependent upon anybody, unless perchance they should be afflicted in some way, and then begin to realize their weakness and dependence. But I want to say to you, my young friends, that in the hour of your independence, at the moment when you feel the strongest, you should bear in mind that you are but human, the breath of life is in your nostrils, and you are destined to pass from this world through the portals of death.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1899, pp. 69, 70.

HOW TO PRAY. My brethren and sisters, do not learn to pray with your lips only. Do not learn a prayer by heart, and say it every morning and evening. That is something I dislike very much. It is true that a great many people fall into the rut of saying over a ceremonious prayer. They

begin at a certain point, and they touch at all the points along the road until they get to the winding up scene; and when they have done, I do not know whether the prayer has ascended beyond the ceiling of the room or not.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1899, pp. 71, 72.

AN ADDRESS ON PRAYER—PRACTICAL PRAYER AND HEALING. I thought that a few words from the Book of Mormon might be appropriate as concluding advice and counsel, written by the prophet Moroni:

“And now, my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men;

“For I remember the word of God, which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also.

“For behold, God hath said, A man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent, it profiteth him nothing.

“For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness.

“For behold, if a man being evil, giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.

“And likewise also it is counted unto a man, if he shall pray, and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing; for God receiveth none such.” (Moroni 7:4-9.)

Here, indeed, is a text that would give an opportunity to one moved by the proper spirit, to make a telling discourse among the Latter-day Saints—not applicable to all, but applicable to far too many. It is not good for us to pray by rote, to kneel down and repeat the Lord’s prayer continually. I think that one of the greatest follies I have ever witnessed is the foolish custom of men repeating the Lord’s prayer continually without considering its meaning. The Lord gave

this as a pattern to his disciples who were going out into the world to preach the gospel. It was to show them that they were not to use many words, but were to come directly to the Lord, and ask him for the things they might need, consequently one of the specific provisions in that prayer, and the example set was: "Give us this day our daily bread;" and we see people clothed with plenty, possessed of millions, perhaps, and yet, if they pray at all, they repeat simply the Lord's prayer. It thus becomes only a form; there is no power in it; neither is it acceptable, because it is not offered from the heart, nor with the understanding; and I think that it is desirable for us to look well to our words when we call upon the Lord. He hears us in secret, and can reward us openly. We do not have to cry unto him with many words. We do not have to weary him with long prayers. What we do need, and what we should do as Latter-day Saints, for our own good, is to go before him often, to witness unto him that we remember him and that we are willing to take upon us his name, keep his commandments, work righteousness; and that we desire his Spirit to help us. Then, if we are in trouble, let us go to the Lord and ask him directly and specifically to help us out of the trouble that we are in; and let the prayer come from the heart, let it not be in words that are worn into ruts in the beaten tracks of common use, without thought or feeling in the use of those words. Let us speak the simple words, expressing our need, that will appeal most truly to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He can hear in secret; and he knows the desires of our hearts before we ask, but he has made it obligatory, and a duty that we shall call upon his name—that we shall ask that we may receive; and knock that it may be opened to us; and seek that we may find. Hence, the Lord has made it a loving duty that we should remember him, that we should witness unto him morning, noon, and night, that we do not forget the Giver of every good gift unto us.

“Wherefore, a man being evil, cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift.

“For behold, a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water; wherefore a man being a servant of the devil, cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ, he cannot be a servant of the devil.

“Wherefore, all things which are good, cometh of God; and that which is evil, cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

“But behold, that which is of God, inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him is inspired of God.

“Wherefore take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God, to be of the devil.

“For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil; wherefore I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God,

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil and believe not in Christ and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil, for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no not one; neither doth his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

“And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge, ye shall also be judged.

“Wherefore I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ, that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.” (Moroni 7:10-19.)

I think that here, in the words that I have read, are some plain fingerboards, some plain, simple guideposts; and if we, as Latter-day Saints, believing as we do in the divinity of this book which was translated by the gift and power of God, through the inspiration that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith, would read these words as believing children should read, with understanding, in faith, being sure that God inspired them, and then put them into practice, I think it would not be long before we could do away with appeals to bishops' courts, and high councils, and with the present necessity for teachers' visits, to try to settle difficulties among Latter-day Saints. I believe every man would be his own judge, for he would judge righteously, because he would judge in the light of truth, in the light and justice—not selfishly, not covetously, but in the light that has come from the heavens in the latter-day, through revelations from God.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 11, August, 1908, pp. 729-732.

PRAY FOR THE AUTHORITIES. We have met together this afternoon in the capacity of a conference of this stake of Zion. We have had presented before us the stake authorities, together with the home missionaries, that we might sustain them by our vote, which means also by our faith and prayers, and to stand by them in the discharge of all the duties that devolve upon them. It is an important duty resting upon the Saints who vote to sustain the authorities of the Church, to do so not only by the lifting of the hand, the mere

form, but in deed and in truth. There never should be a day pass but all the people composing the Church should lift up their voices in prayer to the Lord to sustain his servants who are placed to preside over them. Not only should they do this in behalf of the president of the stake and his counselors, but they should do it in behalf of the high council, before whom, in connection with the presidency of the stake, matters of vast importance to the members of the Church are brought from time to time for their judgment and counsel. These men should have the faith of the people to sustain them in discharge of their duties, in order that they may be strong in the Lord. These authorities are also presented before the people, so that if there is any fault in them, worthy of objection to their acting in the positions to which they are called, the Saints who know of these objections may make them manifest, in order that such inquiry may be instituted as may be necessary to ascertain the truth, that those who are not worthy may be dropped, and only such as are worthy and faithful in the performance of their duties be sustained in these exalted positions in the Church.

We should not permit ourselves to go about from day to day with a spirit of murmuring and fault-finding in our hearts against those who are presented before us to be sustained in responsible positions. If we have anything in our hearts against any of these brethren, it is our duty, as conscientious members of the Church, first, as the Scriptures direct, to go to them alone and make known to them our feeling toward them and show them the cause of such feeling; not with a desire in our hearts to widen or increase the difficulty, but we should go to them in the spirit of reconciliation and brotherly love, in a true Christian spirit, so that if any feeling of bitterness exists within us it may be absolutely removed; and if we have cause against our brother, that we may be in a position to remedy the evil. We should seek to love one another and to sustain one another

as children of God and as brothers and sisters in the cause.

The presentation of the authorities of the Church before a conference is made obligatory upon the Church. It is the command of the Lord that we shall meet together to transact the business of the Church, an important part of which is to sustain the authorities of the Church, thus renewing our covenant to uphold God's authority which he has instituted in the earth for the government of his Church. And I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of Latter-day Saints honoring and sustaining in truth and in deed the authority of the holy priesthood which is called to preside. The moment a spirit enters the heart of a member to refrain from sustaining the constituted authorities of the Church, that moment he becomes possessed of a spirit which inclines to rebellion or dissension; and if he permits that spirit to take a firm root in his mind, it will eventually lead him into darkness and apostasy. It makes no difference how much we may profess to love the gospel and prize our standing in the Church, if we allow the spirit of darkness to take possession of our minds, the light and love within us will go out, and bitterness and enmity will take possession of our souls. Then, oh how dark, how bitter and wicked we may become!—*Salt Lake Stake C. R.*, June 12, 1898.

BLESSINGS FOLLOW PRAYERS. Family and secret prayers should be observed, not alone to comply with the commandment of the Lord, but because of the wonderful blessings to be gained. The Lord has said we should inquire of him.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 21, December, 1917, p. 104.

CORRECT OUR NEGLECTS. What shall we do if we have neglected our prayers? Let us begin to pray. If we have neglected any other duty, let us seek unto the Lord for his Spirit, that we may know wherein we have erred and lost our opportunities, nor let them pass by us unimproved.—*Deseret Weekly News*, Vol. 24, p. 708.