

## The Perpetuity of Prayer (I)

*“Lord, I cry to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. (Psalm 141:1-2)*

The setting, provocation and petitions of this prayer are not peculiar or unusual. They are altogether common with our own prayers and the petitions of all saints of all times. It envisions the lot of all of us whose God is the Lord. Some things our prayers and prayer life will tell us:

Our prayers always reveal where we are spiritually. Nothing can put the finger of God on our state more quickly or surely than this perpetual exercise of the righteous.

The first important thing they tell us is whether we pray or not...**IF** we pray. All godly persons pray. God is their life. He is their Counselor, their Hope, Rock and Refuge. The ungodly do not pray; they live as if there were no God, and face every eventuality with their own wits and resources. But the godly dare not face a day without prayer. Every decision, action, thought, deed is taken with an eye toward the approval or disapproval of God. He is in all our thoughts, and the decisive Factor in every thing.

Secondly, our prayers tell us where we are spiritually by *how* we pray. Do we pray with the urgency, the entreaty, the cry, the plea, that mark of fervency and earnestness? Casual, cool, mechanical mouthing of words betray, not only unbelief, but an unawareness of the peril of our environment, and the treachery and power of our own sinful flesh. It is a rote ritual that leans on nothing, and is little concerned if God hears or even exists. Like the Pharisee in Jesus’ illustration: it is “praying with ourselves”.

Thirdly, *what* we pray about tells us where our hearts and our treasures are. If we are truly praying, the things most precious to us, that of which life itself consists will be foremost in our cries. If our prayers are all taken up with the cares and fleshy pursuits of this temporal life, then we are likely walking after the flesh, and our hearts are far from God. But if the primary concern of our souls is our standing and state before God, our sensible communion with Him, and the comforts of His approval, then our prayers will be spiritual and effectual.

Fourthly, our prayers reveal our circumstances. Eventualities, both good and bad, are always pressing upon our minds, stirring our souls, and either provoking joy, thanksgiving, comforts, peace, and optimistic expectations, or sorrow, grief, pain, anxieties and fears.

All of these, and more, are rehearsed in prayer, for we are in our closets, alone with God. The world is shut out. We are in conference with God, and matters of life and death are brought out and cleared with our Maker, our Rock and Refuge. That is the reality and utility of the perpetual prayer of the righteous.

- C. M.