

'A Devout Man's Rehearsal of Prayer

"I cry out with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord! I will keep Your statutes. I cry out to You; Save me and I will keep your testimonies. I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word.... Hear my voice according to Your loving kindness" (Psalm 119.145-149)

More may be known of a man's spiritual state when he is on his knees than in any other circumstance. It is here that the marks of true spirituality, devotion, sincerity and earnestness are discovered. Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. He did. Everything of spiritual moment that we know is taught us by the Lord, and we can be sure that prayer is not overlooked. If one cannot pray, he is not God's child.

Notice how he prays. He *cries*. He does not "say" or "recite" prayers. Nor is he engaged in preaching, teaching or elocution. Prayers are not half-hearted muttering and mumbling: They are "whole" heart cries! The whole soul is drawn out into them. The "voice" is the language of the heart. We, who have no ears to hear the heart must hear an audible voice, and we give careful attention to the tone and inflections of speech, but sometimes a silent, yet desperate cry of the soul bears more volume in God's ears than the impassioned shouting of a shallow zealot. He prays with importunity, begging, and desperation. "*Hear me!*"

He prays with commitment and resolve. This is no temporary "fox-hole" proposition. An offer to do better if he gets out of this predicament. No, his whole heart is laid out in commitment to God, His testimonies and statutes. There is no place for secret sin to be regarded in the heart. God's law has preempted them.

We further notice what he prays, what his prayers constitute. He prays, not "with himself" as the proud Pharisee, who is praying for his own ears. Nor is he praying to a "power" and "principle" or an "influence". He prays to God, a real Person! The God to Whom he prays is the only God. There is no "plan B" in case he is not heard. His faith is fixed on Him. He prays with words, concrete propositions, real issues. This is a bit more than "morning devotionals" as precious as these may be. "Save me"! Salvation is not a one-experience event. We shall need to be saved every day of our lives from very real, ever present evil.

We also notice when he prays. Prayers should always be prior, early! Our Lord gave us ample warning to anticipate before our need materializes. "Give us our daily bread and deliver us from evil" is not something that is to be prayed shortly before bedtime. So he prays before the day arrives, even before it dawns, before the need is seen or sensed. "Help!" We are the true circumcision who "have no confidence in the flesh". So we do not rise and face a day with the silly notion that today will be a "breeze". We can handle it. No, we cannot handle the least of issues, and we know what enormous mountain may fall across our path today. We desperately need our God today! Help! -C.M.