

breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge . . ." (3: 17-19).

Rooted as a tree and deeply grounded as a house on a firm foundation, you will be able to grasp and possess the experience of the full dimensions of the love of Christ for you. The words "with all saints" suggests that this experience is not for a few choice souls, but for every soul who will yield to the Holy Spirit. No matter how much of Christ's love you may experience, it is as though with a teacup you dipped a small portion from God's infinite ocean of love.

A current religious song uses the words of an old saint found written on the walls of his cell. "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man

a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky." Infinite love of Christ! And you may know it only as Christ feels perfectly at home in your inner self by the Holy Spirit.

But knowing it you will realize the import of Paul's fourth petition. "*That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*" The very attributes of deity Himself! That is the meaning of the word "fullness." With all of our material achievements and comforts, how empty are our lives without this full experience of the presence of Christ! Outer space? Yes. But outer space for you is empty indeed unless you are filled with this fullness of God in Christ through His Holy Spirit. For inner space is infinitely important also!

Space Communications

TEXT: LUKE 18:1

AIRED FEBRUARY 18, 1962

Sometime ago the United States fired a Midas missile satellite into orbit 2,100 miles above the earth. This satellite spewed out 350 million tiny copper needles designed to form a giant radio-reflective belt around the earth. The purpose of this experiment was to place in space a five-mile-wide band of hairlike reflectors which scientists can use to bounce radio waves half way around the earth on frequencies not now available. This is one phase of an effort designed to make possible space communications about the earth.

That modern man is space-minded does not need proving. That he hopes

someday to communicate with other intelligent beings in space, if such exist, is quite evident. How and to what value such communication may be, no one is in position to say at this point.

However, there is a form of space communication which is quite clear, but which is too often sadly neglected by modern man. I am speaking of the communication in space known as prayer. For such is a form of communication between earth-bound man and his God who inhabits every inch of space, yea, even eternity itself.

If to some radio listening post, there should come an unmistakable

message purported to be from outer space, intelligent men everywhere would be alerted in an endeavor to decipher its meaning and respond in kind with an intelligible answer. Is it not reasonable, therefore, that we should heed the word of Him who came from somewhere in space to this earth to say, "*Men, ought always to pray, and not to faint*"? Deciphering the full meaning of these words, and responding in kind, promises the greatest experience in space communications known to man.

Will you permit me to think with you about prayer? As we do so let us note, first, the privilege; second, the power; third, the practice.

THE PRIVILEGE

When Jesus exhorts us to pray and not to faint, He challenges us to avail ourselves of a privilege granted to none other of God's creatures. Too many of us think of prayer as a duty, when actually it is a privilege. Jesus regarded it as the latter. Any casual study of His life will show the lofty place which He gave to prayer.

Someone has said that God has had only one Son who lived without sin, but He has had no son who lived without prayer.

Indeed, the world's only sinless life was its most prayerful life. The disciples noted the place which Jesus gave to prayer. Thus they came to Him with the request, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" They never asked Him to teach them anything else, not even to preach, only to pray. They did not ask Him to teach them when, where,

what, why, or how to pray. Just "*Lord, teach us to pray.*"

Doctor O. Hallesby opens his little book on *Prayer* by quoting Revelation 3:20. "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*" This is a picture of the true experience of prayer. Thus prayer is not some last-resort emergency measure. As one has said, "Prayer is not to be the last resort but the first resort." Prayer is simply opening the door to our lives, our problems, our joys, and our sorrows, and letting God come in to share and to help us with them.

If I am tempted, I welcome Jesus as the One who can keep me from falling. If I have sinned, I open to Him that He may clean up my dwelling place. If I have a joy, I invite Him to share it with me. If sorrow comes, I call for Jesus to strengthen and comfort me. If problems beset me, I swing wide the portal of my life that He may enter to help me to solve them. If loneliness be my lot, I invite Jesus to be my guest that we may commune with each, other. In every experience of life I welcome my Lord, who comes to share it with me.

Note that Jesus does the knocking. He invites me to pray. Thus prayer is not a battering ram by which I crash the door to God's treasure house. It is the receptacle by which I receive that which He already wants to give to me. In the words of Archbishop Trench, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness."

THE POWER

"*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*" The word "faint" means to grow weary, lose heart, give up, or play the coward. So Jesus says that when you grow weary of life, are tempted to lose heart, give up, or play

"The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of men might become the sons of God."
by Dr. Hobbs on "The Baptist Hour"

the coward, you should pray. It is His way of saying that there is power in prayer. William Cowper said, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." And Alfred Tennyson adds, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Yes, there is power in prayer.

Prayer is a force. It is just as much a force as are the natural powers with which we are familiar—gravity, steam, electricity, or atomic energy. When conditions are right prayer-power works just as certainly as electricity. If properly harnessed it is just as useable as the power of steam. When loosed upon a city its penetrating rays literally blanket a community for good and for God.

But you must remember that prayer is not a force *among* forces. It is a force *above* forces. Whereas these other forces are natural, that of prayer is personal. It is the power that is resident in the very personality of God. In the words of Martin Luther, "Prayer is a powerful thing; for God has bound and tied Himself thereto."

Through his own ingenuity man has imposed upon the forces of nature a superior power, the power of his own personality, and thus has done marvelous things. But there is a limit to the power of man's personality. It is at that point that God's infinite personality takes over if we will allow Him to do so. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. If this is true in the natural order, it is even more so the case in spiritual matters.

A chemist cannot comfort the heart with a test tube. Nor can a mechanical engineer build a bridge of understanding between estranged hearts. Nor can an aeronautical engineer construct a plane which will enable a soul to fly to the throne of God for salvation, succour, or strength. But God by His Holy Spirit can do all

of these things. And when you pray that they be done, you open the channels of grace whereby this power of God is made operative in your life.

Much has been said about the relation of prayer to natural law. It is said by some that God cannot alter the working of natural law in order to answer prayer. But do we know all of God's laws? Doubtless there are still higher laws of God of which we are unaware. May we not say that in answer to prayer God does not cancel or violate known natural laws, but imposes over them other laws of His own choosing to accomplish His purposes. A beautiful poem by Edith Romig Fuller relates this thought to the laws of time and space:

*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 a mountain
Or a city's din;*

*If songs like crimson roses,
Are culled from the thin blue air—
Why should mortals wonder
If God hears prayer?**

But you should remember that there are hindrances to prevailing prayer.

Prayer is hindered by our lack of faith. In Nazareth Jesus could do no wondrous works because of unbelief.

Prayer is hindered by sinful lives. The psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (66:18).

Prayer is hindered by lack of sincerity. James reminds us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it in your lusts" (4:2-3).

*The poem "Proof" by Edith Romig Fuller is from her volume *Kitchen Sonnets*, Metropolitan Press, 1931.

Prayer is hindered by our lack of submission to God's will. We are taught to pray "in Jesus' name." This is no magic formula which guarantees entrance into God's treasure house. It is submission to God's will. Some things for which we pray are not best or right in God's infinite wisdom and mercy. If you could see into the future you would often end your prayers with thanksgiving that they are not granted. God answers every prayer. His answer may be "yes," "no," or "wait." It is our privilege to ask. It is God's will to answer as He sees best.

THE PRACTICE

"Men ought always to pray . . ." "To pray" is an infinite verb, suggesting action. In the words of another I ask you a question. "Are you praying through, or through praying?"

Actually there are some things for which you should not pray. You should not pray that God violate His own will, that He ignore sin, or that He do for you that which He has given you power to do for yourself. A woman wrote her pastor: "Do you think God would do anything about my overweight?" He replied, "This kind goeth out only by fasting." Now she may ask God to give her the will power to restrain her appetite, but not to destroy calories with which she overloads her body.

Paul three times asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh, whatever that was. But God said, "*My grace is sufficient for thee*" (II Cor. 12:9). God did not remove it, but He did give him grace to live with it. Prayer should never become an excuse for laziness, moral or physical weakness, or an effort to escape the stern realities of life. Instead it should be the means by which you open the windows of your soul to give entrance to the power and will of God. And your

prayer should ever be, "*Not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matt. 26:39).

However, our greatest problem is not that we pray for the wrong things, but that we do not pray. You should not allow my foregoing statements to rob you of the experience of prayer. Analysis is no substitute for communion with God. It is better to pray at times for the wrong things than not to pray at all. Present your petitions to God, and leave the analysis to Him. Paul says, "*Be careful [overly anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Phil. 4:6).

If you are too busy to pray, then you are busier than God intends for you to be. A grandmother recently told of an incident with her grandchildren. They were spending the night with her. She reminded them that they had not said their prayers. To which they replied, "Oh, grandmother, we don't have to pray when we are away from home." Finally, at her insistence the little girl knelt by the bed, and rushed through the words of her prayer. When told that he had not said his prayers, the little boy replied, "Oh, grandmother, what sister said goes for both of us!"

Now amidst the veiled humor of the frankness of little children are lessons for each of us. What was wrong with their attitude? They regarded prayer as a duty instead of a privilege. They confused prayer with a time and place. They equated prayer with rote words rather than with the outgoing of the soul. The little boy was content to leave his praying to another. Apply these to your own attitude, and you may find the clue to your failure to enjoy the blessed experience of effectual, fervent prayer. The true dimensions of prayer are not length and breadth, but height and depth.

How and for what should you pray? When the disciples asked Jesus to

teach them to pray, He responded with the Model Prayer, commonly called the Lord's Prayer. In it in embryo is everything for which you should pray. You, as a Christian, should pray to your Father. You should pray for the sanctity of God's name. Before praying for daily bread you are to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom and for the fulfillment of His will. You are to pray for the forgiveness of sins, for strength in the hour of temptation, and for deliverance from the evil one, whether it relate to spiritual or physical enslavement.

Prayer is to be an unceasing relationship between the heavenly Father and His children. As one has said of the Model Prayer, prayer is the cry of a child to his Father. It is the call of a citizen to his King. It is the utterance of a slave to his Master. It is the plea of a beggar to his Benefactor. It is the cry of a sinner to his Saviour. It is the request of a follower to his Guide. It is the cry of a captive to his Deliverer.

The disciples found this to be so. And so may you as you go to school to the Saviour in the experience of prayer.

The Survival of The Unfit

TEXT: ROMANS 5:6

AIRD FEBRUARY 25, 1962

A historian was asked recently if he thought it possible that some form of human life might survive a nuclear war. About to name the Eskimos, he suddenly realized that it was possibly over their land that giant bombers might ferry their lethal loads. Then he replied, "Perhaps, somewhere in the heart of Africa there may be a little band of pygmies which would be left to carry on the human race."

The word "survival" is much on the lips of modern man. Long ago Charles Darwin coined a phrase which has become proverbial, "the survival of the fittest," by which he referred to the process of "natural selection, or the preservation of favored races in the struggle for life." In one form or another this same thought has been expressed by others. For instance, Voltaire wrote to a friend, "It is said that God is always on the side of the heaviest battalions." Napoleon spoke

in like vein, saying, "Providence is always on the side of the last reserve."

Now such utterances may befit cynical men whose philosophy stems from materialism. But they have no place in the vocabulary of the Christian. For the Christian gospel is not "the survival of the fittest." It may more aptly be called "the survival of the unfit." Only as you recognize that you are *unworthy* do you become worthy of the saving grace of God which is in Christ Jesus. This truth is expressed by the apostle Paul when in Romans 5:6 he said, "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for us.*"

Some time ago a man who had just been released from prison came to my study. After relating the nature of his crime, he asked if he would be permitted to attend our church. I assured him that we would welcome