

## **The Privilege of Prayer.**

Text: Psalm 27:8

Suggested Hymns:

420, 265, 424, 426, 422

1) It Is Our Privilege To Pray

2) God's Children Pray

3) We Are To pray

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 27:8, *8 When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Let us today consider one of the great privileges of God's children, — *The Privilege of Prayer*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. It Is Our Privilege To Pray**

#### **We Are Invited To Pray**

Prayer, on the basis of Holy Scripture, may be described as the communion of the soul with God. In the sacred writings of both the Old and the New Testament a number of different words are used to designate what we call prayer.

When for instance, a penitent sinner humbly pours out his heart before God, that is prayer. When God's children join their voices in happy hallelujahs and glorify the eternal and majestic Lord for His great works here in this universe, that is prayer.

When the individual Christian is moved by reason of some special divine blessings in gratitude to lift his heart and hands to his Creator, that is prayer. And then of course petitioning or asking God for those things we stand in need of for body and for soul, for time and for eternity, that also is prayer.

According to the teachings of Holy Scripture it is our privilege to pray. There can be no question about that; for we have numerous Bible-passages in which God Himself very definitely and emphatically invites us to do that very thing.

We have one such passage before us today. Psalm 27:8, <sup>8</sup> *When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”* That is a poetic way of saying that we should come to God in prayer. What is expressed here in a poetic manner is more commonly stated in other passages.

For instance, we have the invitation of God to pray in Psalm 50:15, <sup>15</sup> *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.* We also have the invitation in Matthew 7:7, <sup>7</sup> *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”*

Surely, we cannot remain unmoved by that wonderful truth. We certainly cannot accept in a mere matter-of-fact way, the statement that we may pray to God. The very idea that you and I may step into the presence of the majestic God and hold communion with Him surely ought to fill our hearts and minds with amazement.

When socially, financially, and politically prominent people of our country go to England and are presented at the royal court of the British queen, every Australian newspaper tells the story in great detail. It is considered quite a privilege to appear before the queen.

But here we have the invitation to appear — no matter who we are — before our God in prayer. And this must strike us all the more when we consider that we come into this world as beings conceived and born in sin, whose natural inclinations are away from God. Our whole natural tendency is to do the very things that God does not want us to do.

Now, having turned our backs to Him, it would seem that God could justly, as the holy, righteous God, shut us out from His presence and not grant us the privilege of an audience with Him. And yet we still have all these wonderful invitations, all these commands that we should come to Him, and His promise that He is eager to hear our supplications.

My friends, for this there is only one explanation, and that is to be found in the love and the mercy of God, who sent into this world, Jesus, His only-begotten Son. Through Him God effected a reconciliation between Himself and us poor sinful mortals; for Jesus, as our Substitute, bore our transgressions and suffered our punishment, so that He as our attorney can now plead for us and ask the heavenly Father for His sake to grant our prayers.

There is an incident in old Greek history which told of a very unworthy Greek who had lived a criminal life and was being tried before a Greek court. The judges were just about to condemn him, when his brother appeared. This brother had been a faithful servant of his country, a great general, whose arms had been mutilated and whose face and head had been scarred in the battles which he had fought for his people.

When that mutilated brother appeared and held up his crippled arms and pointed to his scars and to his wounds, he succeeded in moving the judges for his sake to release his wretched and undeserving brother.

That is somewhat comparable to the thing which Jesus does for us. We are unworthy children of our heavenly Father who should not receive from Him grace and mercy and blessing. We have not deserved them. Divine holiness and righteousness must condemn us; but Jesus, our mutilated Brother, appears in the court-room of God for us. He holds up those hands that have been pierced by nails. He points to the side which has been laid open by the spear.

He allows the eyes of God to see that blood-stained back scarred by the scourge and to view the marks of the crown of thorns pressed on His sacred brow. And then He pleads that for His sake the Father would be kind to us and hear our prayers and grant us our requests. And so it is possible, in the name of Jesus, for Jesus' sake, to come into the presence of God, and ask Him for those things we stand in need of.

## **2. It Is Our Privilege To Pray God's Children Pray**

If we look into history, we observe that God's children and the disciples of Jesus Christ have always been very happy because of this privilege and have always been very earnest and diligent in the use which they made of prayer.

We can go way back to the first mother of the human race and hear her exclaim when she gave birth to her first son, Cain, "*I have gotten a man from the Lord.*"<sup>1</sup> That beautiful expression of joy and gratitude was a prayer of thanksgiving.

In Genesis 4:26 we are told, *Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.* From this we see that already at the very beginning of history large

numbers of people got together for a formal public Worship Service and prayed to God.

In the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we find prayer playing a very prominent part. It was Jacob who, while returning from the home of his uncle Laban to the land of his birth, spent a whole night wrestling with the Angel of the Lord and saying, *“I will not let You go unless You bless me!”*<sup>2</sup>

Moses, the man whom God selected to lead His people out of bondage, was very diligent in prayer, not only with reference to his personal affairs, but also with regard to matters of his public life and ministry. We read how he prayed to God to remove the plagues, so that Pharaoh would relent and allow the children of Israel to depart Egypt.

Even in the days of the Judges, when the moral and spiritual life of Israel was at a very low ebb, even in that period we find some people very diligent in prayer. It was in this time that Hannah stood in the Tabernacle at Shiloh and prayed most fervently that God might grant to her a child, a son, whom she could dedicate to the Lord.<sup>3</sup> She called her son Samuel.

When we come to the time of King David and Solomon, we find that their souls often communed with God; for a large number of their prayers have been recorded for us; and very beautiful prayers they are indeed.

And when we read the writings of the prophets, we cannot but realise how fervent their prayer-life must have been. This is true not only of the prophets, who so earnestly warned God’s children before the destruction of Israel and the Babylonian Exile, but also of those prophets who served Israel after its return from the captivity.

Again, in the times of the New Testament we observe that one of the important and outstanding characteristics in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ was His devotion to prayer. Frequently Jesus withdrew from all others, even from His most intimate disciples, in order that He might in solitude have opportunity to address the heavenly Father in prayer.

In the life of the apostles, prayer also played a very important part. You cannot but notice when you read of Paul, of Peter, and of the other disciples just what a precious thing prayer was to them.

Nor do we find prayer only in the lives of those who were apostles and ministers, but we are told that also the laymen were equally devout and diligent in the exercise of this privilege. The Scriptures tells us that *they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*<sup>4</sup>

And whenever one or the other of the apostles was in trouble, we hear that the rest joined in prayer that God might rescue him. Yes, diligence in prayer has always been an outstanding characteristic of every devoted and consecrated child of God.

There is not one great servant in the kingdom of God to whom you can point whose life was not marked by fervency in prayer. Take any of the great missionaries, and you will find that their souls stood in earnest, constant communion with their Lord.

It was so also with Martin Luther, the great Reformer. He was able again and again to bear testimony to what he believed to be the truth because he was diligent and earnest in prayer.

What is true of the great servants in the kingdom of the Lord has been true also of many, many others who have rendered a worthwhile service to the human family.

Look at the outstanding statesmen and the national leaders the world has had. Let us think of a man like George Washington. Any one who is familiar with his life knows that he was diligent in prayer, and no one would find it possible to explain how he was capable of enduring what he endured and of bearing what he bore were it not for the fact that he led a prayerful life.

George Washington was so earnest about prayer that as a young man he wrote out prayers for himself, which he used and which we can read to this day as a testimony to his faith and as evidence of his earnestness and diligence in prayer.

### **3. It Is Our Privilege To Pray We Are To Pray**

Now, my friends, just as others have accepted God's invitation and said, *"Your face, LORD, I will seek"* so we ought to accept it. Certainly, if we are not

diligent in prayer, it cannot be due to the fact that we do not need prayer. There are so many situations in which we are in great need of prayer.

Just think of our spiritual life, — how weak we are in faith! All of God's wonderful promises exist for us. But, like Peter who started to sink while walking on the Sea of Galilee because he lost confidence in the promise of Christ, so we constantly find ourselves sinking from lack of faith.

Maybe we are afraid that God has forgotten all about us. When our sins condemn us, we live in fear. We have doubts concerning our eternal future. When afflictions come, we do not cling with steadfastness to the words and promises of God. We are actually inclined to forsake God, as though there was no God in whom we can safely trust. We need to pray to God that He would fill our hearts with faith and confidence lest we sink.

We also need God's help in order to withstand life's various temptations. Now, when I speak of temptations, I want everybody to realise that we all have temptations. It is not only the young who are tempted. True, the temptations which come to the young may be of a different character, but we all have our temptations. And it requires greater strength than we ourselves have successfully to resist them. We must be assisted by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

We must confess with Luther, "*With might of ours can naught be done.*"<sup>5</sup> And so we have reason to pray that God would give us the power and strength that we may not be misled and not do those things which hurt our soul and ultimately bring us into destruction; but that He would rather let us live so that our lives will be in absolute accord with His holy will.

Only then can we be sure that our lives will reflect glory upon His name, fill our souls with happiness, and contribute to the welfare of our fellow-men. It requires prayer to accomplish this.

Again, we need prayer in our church-life. We are all just human beings, and so we must pray that the minister may faithfully adhere to the preaching of God's Word to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We need prayer in order that we, who are inclined to be greedy, to be selfish, to be vain, may overcome all of these weaknesses and harmoniously work together, and each on his or her own part, make that contribution which with

God's help we can make for the building up of our Saviour's kingdom here on earth.

It is only when we pray that we shall have success. It is only in a praying congregation where the real beauty of spiritual life and Christian character may be found. Christians who do not pray have a very weak kind of Christianity. Christians who do not pray, who do not exercise this most glorious of their Christian privileges, are not very likely to manifest much Christianity in other aspects of their life.

We need prayer in our own homes. There is the relationship between husband and wife. We know that no husband is perfect and that no wife is perfect. Not one of us is perfect, and so we must constantly pray to God to give us a forgiving spirit, so that we may patiently bear with one another's weaknesses. This is essential if we want to continue in marital happiness and live harmoniously with one another.

We need prayer also to the end that we as fathers and mothers may be able to live up to our parental responsibilities. Sons and daughters are definite responsibilities resting on our consciences and souls. It is for us to rear them in such a manner that they may grow up to God's glory and to the larger service of humanity. If this is to be accomplished, we need help from on high. We need greater wisdom, divine guidance, and so on. All these things God will graciously grant in answer to our prayers.

It is in times like these especially that we ought to be diligent in prayer. It is from God the all blessings flow. From Him every good gift must come. And in a time when there are many people who are unemployed within our country, it is not difficult to realise that a country so situated is called upon to cope with problems that are fraught with many dangers.

When people in whose hearts there may not be the fear of God, and no respect for law and government find themselves in dire want, it is hard to tell what they may do in a moment of despair.

My friends, we owe it to our nation to pray to God that He would bless and guide us and restrain unrest in our country. It is a time which loudly calls for prayer.

Now, my friends, if you and I who have this glorious privilege of prayer will earnestly make use of it, then we may rest assured that we shall not do so in vain.

Let us therefore, having heard the invitation of our text “*Seek My face,*” reply with the psalmist, “*Your face, LORD, I will seek.*” Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 4:1

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 32:26

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 1:9–11

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:42

<sup>5</sup> Hymn 195