

Pastor Russell's Sermon

WHO MAY PRAY AND WHO MAY NOT

Prayer Not a Duty; a Privilege, Says Pastor Russell.

JEROVAH A GREAT KING.

Sinners May Approach Him Only in His Appointed Way—No Man Cometh Unto the Father but by Me. Formalistic Prayer Valueless—Prayers Which Never Ascend to God—Rejected Prayers—Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving—Prayers of the Saintry Are Limited.



Springfield, Mass., July 13.—Today opens an eight day Convention of the INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION. The attendance is large. Many speakers of great ability are to give addresses. The Convention seems to be wholly for the purpose of discussing the teachings of the Bible, and for cultivating Christian fellowship. The program calls for four discourses per day, and so earnest are the delegates that apparently few will miss a service. Pastor Russell was one of the speakers of today. We report his discourse on Prayer, from the text, "Mine House shall be called an House of Prayer for all people."—Isaiah 56:7.

The Great Teacher's words applied to the Jewish Temple, typical of the Spiritual Temple of the future. The typical Temple had its various courts and different divisions of worshippers. Some might come near and some not so near to the Holy of Holies, in which the Shekinah glory represented Jehovah God. Only the priesthood had access to the Most Holy; only the Levites were permitted in the inner court; then came outer court divisions, some of which were for Gentiles.

Thus did God represent in the type conditions not of the present, but of the future. The antitypical Temple has not yet been built. St. Peter describes it as the Church in glory. He tells that Christ is its chief Corner Stone, and that all the faithful saints of God are living stones, now being chiseled and polished for places in that glorious Temple of the future.

As the stones of Solomon's Temple were all shaped and completed before the construction was begun, so the Church of Christ will be constructed at the end of this Age, after the "living stones" shall have been hewn and fitted for glory. As the stones of Solomon's Temple were so perfectly fitted to their places that they all went together without the sound of a hammer, so will it be with the construction of the Church, which will be accomplished by the power of the First Resurrection—"changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God."—1 Corinthians 15:50-52.

As in the type, so in the antitype, the finished structure will be followed by a Divine recognition. The Temple will be filled with the glory of the Lord, and be thus marked as His dwelling place for all time. Thus will be established—very soon, we trust—God's antitypical House of Prayer, wherein and whereby all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues may come into fellowship with their Creator, and have communion with Him through His appointed agencies.

Only Consecrated Priests Pray. When I refer to consecrated priests, do not misunderstand me to mean the clergy of any denomination nor of all denominations. The Bible recognizes no clerical class, but declares, "All ye are brethren. One is your Master, even Christ." (Matthew 23:8.) For more than eighteen centuries God has been calling out from amongst men the Royal Priesthood class. Jesus, their High Priest, was first called to suffering and then to glory; and His footstep followers have since been invited to suffer with Him, that they may also reign with Him.

Through this Royal Priesthood, the world of mankind in the future will have access to God. Now none but this Royal Priesthood have access, and they through their great Head, the High Priest of their profession. These, by faith, have access to God in prayer at the Golden Altar of Incense. These see the light of the Golden Candlestick and partake of the holy Bread of Divine Truth.

Others may approach God in the sense of being interested in Him, desiring to do His will, and of seeking to co-operate with the Royal Priesthood and to render service to the Lord's cause. The influence of such an approach toward God is always beneficial, uplifting, cleansing. But the point we are emphasizing is that all such approach to God stops short of the privilege of true prayer to Him—of true relationship to Him as children.

None may pray, "Our Father, which art in Heaven," except those who have approached God in His appointed way—through Christ—and who since have been forgiven, and inducted into the family of God by a begetting of the Holy Spirit. The common concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is wholly unscriptural, and sets aside entirely the Savior and His important work as Advocate for the Church in the present, and as Mediator elect for the world in the future.

Wrong Views Respecting Prayer. Nearly all Christian people in the past have discerned the subject of prayer very indistinctly. Sinners have been urged to pray; moralists, who have never accepted Christ as their Savior, have been chided for not praying. In a general way the impression has been given to the world that God is very anxious to have some recognition on the part of humanity, and will be glad to be approached by anybody at any time. How strange a mistake!

Was it not God who denounced sin and placed the penalty, or curse, or death upon the sinner, and cut off the sinner from fellowship with Himself? Has He changed? Will He ever change? Was not the statement that "God heareth not sinners" a correct one?—John 9:31.

The Church Has an Advocate. God's arrangement whereby His consecrated people may approach Him acceptably is clearly stated. "We [the Royal Priesthood] have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." (1 John 2:1.) But before the Redeemer of men will become the Advocate for any, certain terms and conditions are laid down. Those approaching are first of all reminded that "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me"—the Advocate. And upon inquiring respecting the terms upon which He would be their Advocate, they are admonished that He serves only those who become His disciples. Inquiring the terms of discipleship, we receive the answer, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."—Matthew 16:24.

Under these conditions the poorest and the meanest of humanity has the privilege of approaching with courage the Throne of Heavenly Grace to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in every time of need. (Hebrews 4:16.) But equally certain is it that none others have access to God. "Neither is there any other name given under Heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved" from our fallen condition, than the name of Jesus.

Perhaps there is something revolutionary in this thought that, while all may worship in the sense of bowing down and showing reverence to the Almighty, none but the consecrated followers of Jesus have any assurance whatever of the Divine supervision of their affairs. And none but these have any authority for coming to God in prayer.

One exception to this rule should be here stated; namely, that the children of consecrated believers, while they are still immature of judgment, have a standing with God through their relationship to their parents. St. Paul makes this very evident in his declaration: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."—1 Cor. 7:14.

The translation of this text slightly beclouds the Apostle's thought, which is that where either of the parents has become a disciple of Jesus, the child stands related to God, regardless of the standing of the other parent. Such children may participate in worship and in prayer. But this relationship manifestly terminates shortly after the child shall have come to a personal knowledge of its responsibilities. Thereupon it must make a personal covenant with the Lord, or have its standing with the rest of the world.

And that standing, be it remembered, does not mean liability to eternal torment. It merely means alienation, separation, from God and from His special care and providences in the present time; for the Divine arrangement is for the ultimate blessing of mankind through the Messianic Kingdom—through the Temple of Glory and its Royal Priesthood glorified, in its Kingdom power for a thousand years.

Might the Truth Discourage? Some might be inclined to say, "There are millions of people who, with more or less formality, approach God in prayer daily. Should we not fear that after a truthful presentation of the facts these would be discouraged? Our reply is that the whole responsibility for the Divine Plan rests upon its Divine Author, who says, "He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully." Indeed, the preaching of the Truth on this subject may bring many indifferent ones to the point of decision, and thus greatly benefit them.

Have we not been telling the world in general that there is practically no difference between God's people by consecration and the children of this world? Have we not been misleading them in this respect? Is it not high time that they were told the truth on this, as well as some other subjects?

A gentleman who attended my preaching in London met me the following day and said, "Your discourse did not at all encourage me; indeed, it greatly discouraged me. I had for years thought of myself as a Christian, being a member of the Church of England. I participated in its service, but without ever having had the thought that I could not be acceptable as one of His children, nor as a member of the Church whose names are written in Heaven, except by the making of a full consecration of my life to the Lord. I had some serious thoughts on my homeward way."

We replied to the effect that faithful is the word of a friend; and that if our shaking of his self-confidence in a formalistic piety should result in bringing him to a true consecration to the Lord and to a membership in the Royal Priesthood beyond the veil, he would thank us eternally therefor. In any event, he was a witness that our duty had been faithfully performed. There is a great deal of sleepiness, amongst Christian people.

Many have mixed for themselves theological notions, in which a form of godliness combined with worldliness is producing a lethargy as respects good Bible study, Christian character and the service of God as His ambassadors. We would like to awaken these, to have them know that they are trifling with the Gospel call, and unless they take the decisive step they will be forever outside the High Calling and privileges of the Church.

For What May Saints Pray? Not only is the privilege of prayer confined to the consecrated people of God, "sanctified in Christ Jesus," but even these are restricted in respect to what things they may properly pray for. St. James calls attention to the fact that many prayers are entirely unheard, because the petitioners "have asked amiss"—for the gratification of their own selfish desires.

The Master tells us the conditions upon which we may have the assurance of the Divine response. He says, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) At first this appears to give God's consecrated people the right to ask for anything and to expect everything.

But note again the conditions: (1) "If ye abide in Me." Those who are in Christ are New Creatures; to them "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." Those who have thus come into membership in the Body of Christ, the consecrated Church, have given up their own wills, have set aside earthly aims and prospects, and have accepted instead the will of the Lord and the Heavenly hopes and prospects set before them in His Word. These, therefore, do not wish to ask for earthly things, but merely to request the Heavenly things, which would assist them in making their calling and election sure.

Then comes the other consideration: (2) "If My Words abide in you." This signifies that the petitioner not only has a new will—the will of the Master—but that he has sought to know what that will is, as expressed in the Master's words, or teachings. And all such pupils in the school of Christ are taught of Him and guided into the understanding of the Scriptures, hence are able to rightly divide the Word of Truth, to appreciate the promises which belong at the present time to the Church, and to differentiate these from the promises for the world in the next Age. These know what to ask for, and having the Master's spirit, would ask for nothing else. Thus all their petitions, being for spiritual things promised in the Scriptures, would have a rich fulfillment.

When St. Paul urges the consecrated Church to "pray without ceasing" and "in everything give thanks," he evidently does not refer to formal prayers, but rather to that prayerful attitude of the heart which under all circumstances and conditions looks to God—either for wisdom and guidance to do His will, or with thanksgiving and praise for blessings received and prayers answered.

Nothing in the Apostle's language indicates that the Lord's people should be always on their knees, or on the other hand that they should never go upon their knees, but merely that they should uplift their hearts to God at all times and in all of life's affairs. The priests in the type offered the morning and the evening sacrifices before the Lord, and so the Royal Priesthood surely desire that every morning and every evening Divine mercy and blessings should be acknowledged with thanksgiving and appreciation.

Not only so, but parental duty properly requires that the Christian parent, so far as possible, should worship with immature children for whom he stands as secondary priest, and that he should offer with these thanksgiving and praise, and petition for wisdom and guidance to the knowing and doing of the will of God.

The Church of Christ, the Royal Priesthood, is a special family of God. "All ye are brethren. One is your Master," and "One is your Father." Whenever these meet, worship and praise should constitute a part of their acknowledgment of the Heavenly Father. Hymns of praise should properly be considered prayer, a united worship, in which all may participate. But if any of the Lord's family, the Royal Priesthood, have gotten into sin, he should hesitate to take any public part in prayer or worship. He should consider himself, because of his enlightenment, to be one of the wicked, and hearken to the message, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction and castest My words behind thee."—Psalm 50:10, 17.

Ab, what changes would be wrought in Christendom if this principle were understood and applied! Many costly choirs of unbelievers would be dismissed. The congregational singing would be much behind its present musical standard for a time at least, but much more acceptable to God. Who can dispute that some time the Christian standard will be lifted to a much higher level than at present? Who can dispute that the effect would be one of great spiritual refreshment and blessing to those really desirous of knowing and serving the Lord?

And who would dispute that the effect upon the worldly-minded would be beneficial also? It would do them good to know the truth—that they are with out God and have no hope, because they have not come into relationship with God through the great Advocate whose only terms they have thus far rejected. Might we not hope that, rightly informed, many of these, now indifferent, would become saints indeed?

HALO" BILL AND COO SENTIMENT UNKNOWN

Selected by Edwin Markham.

Marian Cox has recently written her reminiscences of Japan, and Mitchell Kennerley has published them under the title of "The Man-Made Woman of Japan." The picturesque pen of Mrs. Cox gives us a striking chronicle and I take from it the following:

"The easiest way to arrive at a conception of the Japanese woman is to think of every quality directly contrary to the qualities of the typical American woman, and to see her as the embodiment of these. She is as docile as the American woman is aggressive; as demure as the American is flamboyant; as modest as the American is impudent; as humble as the American is snobbish; as conservative as the American is faddish; as reticent as the American is effusive.

"There is no romance between the sexes in Japan. The relation is either crude and business-like in marriage, or unmentionable and bestial out of marriage. No wonder there is no word in the Japanese language which can be translated as 'love' in our language. The only love that can be spoken or written of in Japan is the filial. There are no words of endearment for lovers, nor for husband and wife. Marriage is without courtship; courtship without kisses, caresses or pet names.

"No Japanese knight has ever performed a deed of valor for the love of a woman. No Japanese poet has ever written a poem of 'love' that could be read to a pure woman. These people have put all their refinement into their etiquette of life, and so have had none left for the elemental facts of life; they have put all their imagination in a hair-splitting epicureanism, and so have had none left with which they might dignify humanity's greatest passion. When the Japanese nation evolves the kiss of man and woman she may cease to be a mimic and become a molder of civilization.

"In reading of the loveless, kissless, woman-denouncing Japanese, one might believe him austere, chaste, puritanical, the true ascetic; and to those unversed in the duality of human nature it comes with a shock of surprise to learn that, on the contrary, his ruthless immortality and licentiousness are notorious and the scandal of Japan.

"There is one feature of this so unique and so illustrative of the vicious outgrowths of man's lopsided civilization that it has a claim upon the interest of every student of Japan or of human nature; the institution of the Yoshiwara.

"Classified with our 'white slave traffic' and the sordid evils that nightly stalk Broadway, Piccadilly and the Parisian boulevard, it yet differs from them all in certain elements which make it the most sickening and tragic exhibition the world affords of the human injustice and shame accorded women in civilizations made strictly of the men, for the men, by the men.

"At a temple in Nikko there is a famous picture of three monkeys, one with his hands covering his eyes, which means see no evil; another with hands covering ears, which means hear no evil; the other with hands covering mouth, which means speak no evil. This is evidently the Buddhist formula for peace on earth, good will to men; but, thanks to the men who have not observed it, humanity has evolved from some of its barbarities, and most of the barbarities that exist today endure because women have been too long and thoroughly trained by men—to see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

"No one can understand the Japanese people, until he has seen the menagerie-like spectacle of that portion of its womanhood whom they place outside of human rights in a hideous travesty of human dignity. In the dusk of every evening, just as the temple bells are pealing forth their summons to the strange gods of Nippon, this spectacle begins: Women, girls—the majority mere children in appearance—file into cages which open onto the streets, exactly like the cages in a zoo, and sit for hours behind those wooden bars like merchandise for sale, with an aureole of tortoise shell combs around their heads and bedecked in garish splendor of attire. The spectacle arouses disgust and scorn until one learns the hidden springs behind this system of woman-sale, and then there comes only pity.

"The government has placed its sanction upon this institution; 'thus saith the law' is more powerful in Japan than in any other civilized country. So the idea has been perpetuated among the people that parents have a moral (because legal) right to dispose of their daughters to their own advantage, and the inmates of the Yoshiwara are sold by their parents or adopted parents when too young and ignorant to understand the nature of the transaction or the ghastly future it will bring. But even if she knew, the Japanese daughter is as powerless to resist the parental will as her brother, the soldier, would be to resist the will of his emperor. As we know, she is taught filial devotion as her religion.

"It is not true, as has been so frequently stated, that unchastity does not dishonor a woman in Japan. Even these slaves of the Yoshiwara, involuntary victims, are treated as below hu-

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man kind. Until a few years ago they had no chance of escape from what even the Japanese call 'the bitter sea of misery.' When there were runaways the law authorized their capture, punishment and return to their keepers. That there were many runaways we can believe when we learn that the average number of suicides among these girls throughout the land was forty and fifty a month.

"During the past four years there has been a lively agitation in Japan for a complete change in its social and moral system. The leaders of opinion proclaim that something is morally wrong, but do not seem to know what it is that must be changed, just what new laws to enact—laws in the masculine solution is difficult."

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