

WHY SOME PRAYERS ARE NOT ANSWERED

By the Rev. E. E. Shelhamer*

"Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." James 4:3. We express pious wishes for this and that; we pray that wars may cease; we pray for the salvation of our loved ones and they continue to be stubborn and obstinate; we pray to get out of debt and get in deeper; we pray to get healed and continue to grunt. Now, something is wrong! Either God does not answer prayer as formerly, or there is something wrong in the way we pray. Let us see.

The Grudging Man's Prayer

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. Many people pretend to pray, but at the same time cease to fellowship those who do not agree with them. They say "I forgive, but it is hard to forget." Well, as long as one can easily remember, it looks as though he were nursing an old sore. Jesus said, "Love your enemies" (were they really such?) and a heart full of love can do it. Some folk are too refined to blurt out ugly words, yet they can hold a distant and unforgiving spirit. So long as this is the case your prayers are simply mockery. You must either get rid of inward disunity, or stop saying over words and calling them prayers. What hypocrisy in nearly every church! People taking sacrament and pretending to worship God, then going out to criticize the pastor or some one with whom they disagree. "First be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift."

The Stingy Man's Prayer

"He that stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Proverbs 21:13. A stingy man, or one who tries to make himself believe that "Everyone is doing fairly well and if not, he is to blame," such a man lacks pity, which is an essential element in the Christian religion. The fact that you know that some one is needy, puts you under obligation to help him. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" John 3:17.

There is something about a spirit of liberality that brings the peculiar blessing of heaven. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Show me a man who is close and over-exacting and I will show you one that is hard and out of touch with God. He may sit on the front seat and hold important positions, but he seldom if ever weeps over sinners, especially the "poor" and unfortunate. He can eat big meals (if another pays the bill) and forget that the wife and children are skimping at home. He can have his own teeth fixed while his wife is neglected. There is no hope for such a man until he repents. Paul calls him an "idolater" and declares he hath "no inheritance in the kingdom of God." Yes, "he shall cry, but not be heard."

The Dishonest Man's Prayer

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." Proverbs 28:9. One can do this in various ways: by being prejudiced against a certain preacher, or place of worship; by declining to read searching literature; by staying

away from old fashioned saints; by drawing back from light and refusing to look at his besetting sins.

It is amazing how a person can deceive himself by absenting himself from red hot truth, then going over to another place and profess without making apology or restitution. Remember it costs just as much to get the favor of God in one place as in another! You can get a cheap profession, but you cannot get the abiding smile of God at a bargain counter. It means a complete abandonment wherever you go.

An Inconsiderate Man's Prayer

"Giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, that your prayers be not hindered." I Peter 3:7. Why is it that a man may pray better when away from the family and away from the town where he is known? Is he harsh and overbearing? Does he keep the purse and make the wife give an account of every penny? Does he ever apologize even to the children for being too severe? It is a false notion that a humble confession will lower one. No! It will exalt him.

Do you remember how kind and considerate you were when courting, or when first married? You were ready to jump into a mud hole, if need be, to get her handkerchief or umbrella. How is it now? Do you blame her for not "holding on to your old things?" At one time you lifted the tub or other heavy things but now you let her do it. At one time you praised her good cooking and sympathized with her when she was ill. Are you pained now when she suffers?

But this works both ways. Many a man might do better if he were not hen-pecked day and night. If she could stop whining and would only smile occasionally, things might be different. They say, if a woman sets herself to live for God, she can pull her whole family to heaven. But if she becomes bitter and discouraged she can take her entire household with her to hell.

Yes, friends, these are some things that cripple and hinder prayers and prayers. We read, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Then comes the answer: "Wash you; make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless; plead for the widow: come, now, and let us reason together saith the Lord; thought your sins me as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool: If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land." Isaiah 1:15-19.

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A WATCHWORD FOR THE HOUR

"Give us a watchword for the hour.

A thrilling word, a word of power.

A battle cry, a flaming breath

That calls to conquest or to death.

The glad evangel now proclaim

Through all the earth in Jesus' name.

This word is raging through the skies—

Evangelize! Evangelize!

To dying men, a fallen race,

Make known the gift of gospel grace.

The world that now in darkness lies,

Evangelize! Evangelize!" Selected

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona M. S.

Dear Highway:

It is Sunday evening and I have just returned home from having a service at our Nkokweni outpost. We had an attendance of more than fifty persons. One child was presented to the church. The service concluded with the Lord's Table and an offering. Jemson Ngomezulu is our native preacher at this outpost. The work seems to be growing under his hand. The people are asking for a church building and a school for their children. I have arranged to start a school but we may fail to get a church building as the European farm owner wants the Dutch Reformed Church to build on his farm.

I have finally succeeded in getting the walls of the new Grootspuit church up. They are built of cement blocks and burnt brick. The color contrast is very pretty. The natives of that section are very much pleased with the new building and are busy cutting grass for the thatch. The building is about 20 x 33 feet and will seat more than 150 people. The church is on a farm belonging to a German. He has been very kind and helped us as he has loaned us his wagon and oxen for hauling materials and used his own men to make the cement blocks. This church has taken up a lot of my time and energies recently as I have had to gather together all the building material and supervise the actual construction. My last three trips there have meant nearly five hundred miles of travelling on a bicycle.

I spent the last week-end at Hartland. We had a nice service on Sunday in spite of the numbers being few. After the service I went with two natives to Aloni Mkonza's kraal to have prayer with his family who had come home to have a memorial service for him. It seems likely that the home will be broken up and the children scattered. We shall miss Aloni in the ranks of our preachers. Sunday evening, Brother George Sanders and I went to the Zikalala kraal to have prayers with Jesina and mourn with her over the loss of her husband Angus. Jesina feels that Angus died in the faith. On behalf of the church I gave each family five dollars to pay for a simple casket of boards.

Most of our schools are again open: in fact all except one and that one is closed as we have not yet succeeded in getting a teacher. The Altona attendance is well on towards a record as there are already eighty-five children on the roll.

Continue to pray for the Mission work, the workers and outposts, the Hospital at Hartland and the Dispensary at Altona, the schools, the missionaries, our proposed extension work, and so on. The enemy is fighting back hard but our Invasion forces are still on the offensive.

Yours in Him,

E. A. M. KIERSTEAD

It is a wonderful thing to know the Holy Spirit, to have your soul and your body not the tomb of buried possibilities, but the temple of the Holy Ghost. When the church of God gets to that point, something will happen. Pray God that you and I may get there, and then our witness will shine out and blaze forth.—Gipsy Smith.