

## From the Pastor's Desk 1980-1989

### Prayer

I don't have time. I am too busy. Ours is a hurried age. Despite all the modern conveniences to make life easier and simpler, we seem to be busier than the past generation; a generation which had to do without time saving gadgets. Does time control us, or have we lost control over time? I am thinking in particular now of meditation. In past generations, Christians spent time in meditation. They took time out to reflect on their spiritual life, their relationship to the Lord, their church, their future hope and their present task. As you read of Christians greatly used by the Lord, you'll soon discover that they knew how to meditate. Our forefathers used to speak about their "quiet time". Meditation can be a blessed experience. A scripture text may come to mind which speaks to your situation. You'll find rest and peace in the Lord, renewed strength to cope with the stresses of modern life. I hope and pray that we can develop once again the Biblical "art" of meditation. As an old hymn says it so beautifully:

Take time to be holy, The world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone;  
By locking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

### Times Change

How times have changed! No Dutch government will issue a call to prayer. And this won't happen in Canada either. Our own country has gone through some tremendous changes. A little more than 100 years ago, Canada's first prime minister - Sir John A. MacDonald - publicly gave his life to Christ at a revival meeting in Toronto. At that time no one was surprised to witness such a spiritual commitment by a political leader. In 1891, 98% of Canadians identified themselves as either Protestant or Catholic and most attended a place of worship regularly. Today only 27% of Canadians attend a place of worship regularly. Our nation has become secular. Canada is no longer listed by the United Nations as a Christian nation. No government today will call upon the Christian church to lead the nation in prayer and repentance. Yet, I believe that as a nation we should humble ourselves before God. When the nation of Israel was in crisis, the prophets called for national repentance, prayer, and fasting. "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord" (Joel 1:14).

The spirit of our age doesn't leave room for repentance and humbling before God. So many stand tall and straight. They live without God. Who still bends the knees? Shouldn't we as Christians lead the way? Show the meaning of communal prayer and its power? Or has prayer been moved to the backburner of our interests? Today's crises have led to national and international conferences, shuttle diplomacy and so on. No doubt these activities are all necessary. But God's remedy for our time is still, "...if my people who are called by name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

## **Prayer meeting**

The prayer meeting has been described as "a thermometer" and as the "power-house of the church. The apostolic Church was undoubtedly a praying church. 'Between Christ's ascension and Pentecost the believers were "joined together constantly in prayer(Acts 1: 14). Prayer kept the young church fervent and eager in evangelism. Church history shows a close relation between prayer meetings and revival.

Prayer is a duty and privilege. Through prayer earth touches heaven. Prayer is God's appointed means to bring help in time of need. Prayer is at the very heart of worship. We are never nearer to God and in closer fellowship with our Lord than in prayer. Many Christians are eager to learn more about prayer. Volumes have been written on prayer, both popular and profound. Yet the best school in which to learn to pray is the school of practice. The Lord hears both the whisper of the heart and the cry of the wounded soul. We pray as individuals and as families. The tradition of family devotions after meals is wonderful. I hope that this is kept up until the end of times. We also have prayer meetings; an old Biblical tradition revived. We read Scripture, sing a few hymns, share items of praise or mentioned a specific need and spent some time in prayer. The evening concludes with some more singing. The Lord rules the world and moves His church through the prayers of His people. The world seeks power and control through technology. Through prayer we tap the power of the infinite God so that we may serve Him.

## **Public Prayer**

Prayer has an important place in public worship. When God's people meet together, they join in prayer. Prayer in a church service is a communal activity. We are not just individual believers who occupy pews for a few hours each Sunday. We are the covenant people, God's partners through Jesus Christ, who share each other's sorrows and joys. Notice that in the Lord's prayer, I, my, me, and mine never occur. In ancient Jewish tradition, in which we have our spiritual roots, all are equal before God in prayer. God's heart and ears are open to all His children. "All are equal when they pray before God, women and slaves, sage and simpleton, poor and rich." (Quoted by I. Abrahams Studies in Pharasaism and the Gospels.)

As we pray together we bring our praise and adoration to God. We must have in mind a sense of awe for God's holiness. "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips" (Ps. 34:1). Our thanksgiving for all that God has done for us should be expressed. "I will give thanks, for you answered me: you have become my salvation" (Ps. 118:21). "But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord"(Jonah 2:9). We should also lay before God whatever we have on our hearts. Confession is good for the soul. Repentance and the forgiveness of sin are part of prayer as well as the marvel over God's mercy.

In prayer we offer our petitions. Repeatedly we are told to seek the Lord, for He will answer. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). All our needs are met in Jesus Christ, whether they are at home or in business, at school, in the shop, or on the farm. Our God is able to supply. And

in our days of national uncertainty and international crises, we may plead with the Lord for peace and righteousness.

As we pray together in our public worship, let us give thanks that our heavenly Father never gets bored with the continual coming of His children to Him in praise, repentance and petition.

## **Prayer**

Prayer is a miracle all by itself. Often I think of the wonder of it all. We have a God Who listens and answers. We come to God as individuals, as families and as a congregation. The congregational prayer is one of the highlights of each service. Together we adore God in Christ, humble ourselves before Him, repent of our sins, and ask for forgiveness. Whatever our background and age, we are united before God in prayer. This is an act of God's grace. We also bring our petitions to Him. We pray for our sick, for the needs of young and old alike, and our missionaries. And we present to the Lord the needs of the world. The needs are so overwhelming!

Congregational prayer should never become routine. We all are inclined to place higher value on the extra-ordinary and take the ordinary for granted. When there is an urgent need in a time of crisis, we talk about a special prayer service. And such a service has its time and place. Let us not forget that God's grace is at work in each worship service and is active in each congregational prayer.

## **What to pray for?**

Through prayer we have the resources to face life. Our God is able to supply all our needs. As a congregation we also share in the pastoral prayer during the worship services. We have our general petitions; but if you have a special request why not tell your pastor or one of the elders or deacons so that he can incorporate your request in the congregational prayer. Together we approach the throne of the Almighty God. We thank God together, confess our sin and seek forgiveness. We also "intercede for those who have specific needs.