

Praying For One Another

March 3, 2008

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James Montgomery, a British poet and hymn writer, once wrote, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air". Like oxygen is needed for the physical body to live, prayer is essential for the spiritual man to live. As the physical body depends upon air in order to develop and grow, so the spiritual man is dependent upon prayer to sustain his growth and development as a Christian. And while there are other integral ingredients to physical growth, like food and water, there are also other important elements for spiritual development - the internalizing of God's Word and the assembling with the saints together in worship, to name a few.

Prayer is the means by which a Christian communicates to God. In prayer a child of God pours out the heartfelt gratitude of both physical and spiritual blessings; in prayer the confession of sin is made and forgiveness sought; through prayer one seeks for guidance and wisdom; personal needs and the needs of others are often communicated to God. All of this, and more, are a testimony to the fact that Christians are not living independent of God.

There is evidence in the scriptures that Jesus was subject to all the infirmities to which you and I are often subject. Jesus experienced hunger (Mark 11:12), weariness (John 4:6), suffering (Hebrews 5:8), temptation (Hebrews 4:15), sympathy (John 11:35), the need for sleep (Matthew 8:24), and death (John 19:30). Jesus was not self-sustained. He needed to pray and commune with His Father in heaven for support, strength, and endurance. This is evident when he was in the wilderness (Luke 5:16), on the mountain all night (Luke 6:12), alone with His disciples (Luke 9:18, 28), and in Gethsemane when He was exceeding sorrowful unto death (Matthew 26:36-46). If prayer was an essential factor in the relationship with His Father in Heaven as these verses indicate, how vitally important it must then be in our lives as disciples (followers) of Christ. And if Jesus saw the urgency of praying for the specific needs of his disciples (John 17) we should see the importance of doing the same.

Who among our readers have not experienced the woeful pangs and

sorrows of life? Who are not familiar with sickness and death? Who have not encountered tragedy, discomfort, heartache, and difficulties in life? When the stormy winds of life blow and leave a swath of destruction to pick up, sometimes the only peace that one can find is in the fact that there is a Savior who knows and understands, and through whom one can seek and petition the Father in Heaven. These gales may come in the form of disease, death, financial burden, family division, spiritual weakness, calamitous tragedy, or any other hardship or misfortune. And as difficult as it is to undergo such trials, if handled properly with the right spirit, it will help prepare one for something somewhere far better.

When going through such difficulties and adversities we know that there are others who truly care; however, they may not always know what to say or what to do, but they try. Others, on the other hand may have already experienced the journey that we are now embarking upon, and understand how important prayer is while going through life's uneven paths. The real friend is not the one who only verbally wishes me well or bids me warmth and comfort (James 2:16), but instead is the one who prays, and does so constantly. While he always has a prayer on his lips he seeks to understand, not criticize; to be sympathetic or empathetic, not apathetic; to offer peaceful solutions, not antagonistic obstructions; to help bear a burden, not create another. The one who fervently prays for me is the one who loves me, and is the one whom I love. Even if they don't know exactly what to say or do, they know how to pray!

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