



The Prayer Room

Brought to you by the Good News Bearers

February 18 - 24, 2008

Martin Luther's Way of Praying

For most people in Luther's 16th Century world, prayer was a mechanical, religious rite, a legalistic work, requiring little thought. Luther himself is thought to be one of the most dedicated men of prayer in all of history, and he worked hard to reform prayer.

When his barber, Peter Beskendorf, asked him how to pray, Luther proceeded to write a little book on the subject. First published in 1535 under the title, "**A Simple Way to Pray, for a Good Friend**". this prayer guide is still with us today. Luther begins with these words: "**I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen.**"

Some suggestions Luther gave to his friend, Peter:

"First, when I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer, because of other tasks or thoughts (for the flesh and the devil always impede and obstruct prayer), I take my Psalter (Book of Psalms), hurry to my room ...and as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed and ...some psalms..."

"It is a good thing to let prayer be your first business in the morning and the last at night. Guard yourself carefully against those false, deluding ideas that tell you, 'wait a little while. I will pray in an hour, first I must attend to this or that' ...Those who work faithfully, pray twice... Christ commands continual prayer: ask and it will be given to you, seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened to you...pray without ceasing...we must unceasingly guard against sin and wrongdoing, something one cannot do unless one fears God and keeps his Commandments...we become relaxed and lazy, cool and listless towards prayer. The devil who besets us is not lazy or careless, and our flesh is too ready and eager to sin and is disinclined to the spirit of prayer.

When your hearts have been warmed by such recitation to yourself (of the 10 Commandments, the Words of Christ, etc.)...kneel or stand with your hands folded and your eyes towards Heaven and speak or think as briefly as you can. "**O Heavenly Father, dear God, I am a poor, unworthy sinner. I do not deserve to raise my eyes or hands toward you or to pray. But, because you have commanded us all to pray and have promised to hear us and through your dear Son, Jesus Christ has taught us both how and what to pray, I come to you in obedience to your Word, trusting in your gracious promises.**"

Luther recommended that our prayers be numerous, but short. Luther taught that we should pray: "brief prayers...pregnant with the Spirit, strongly fortified by faith...the fewer the words, the better the prayer. Few words and much meaning is Christian. Many words and little meaning is pagan."

The Lord's Prayer and the Psalms were tools Luther considered most important for any Christian's prayer life, to be used as models for prayer, as instruction, and as tools to focus our thoughts.

Please include the following in your prayers this week:

Dear Jesus, you who taught us how and what to pray, lead me more and more to prayer this week, with eager and ready heart and mind.

Be there with me as I pray and teach me how to use the Commandments, the Psalms, and the Lord's Prayer as guides to my own prayers. In your dear name I pray. Amen.

Christ commands continual prayer: ask and it will be given to you, seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened to you...pray without ceasing...we must unceasingly guard against sin and wrongdoing, something one cannot do unless one fears God and keeps his Commandments...we become relaxed and lazy, cool and listless towards prayer. The devil who besets us is not lazy or careless, and our flesh is too ready and eager to sin and is disinclined to the spirit of prayer.