

## Prayer

Praise You, Lord Jesus Christ, for we can never tell when You will burst into our lives and help us; giving us Your Spirit, healing our bodies, opening our eyes, encouraging us when we are weak, or giving us the strength to move on. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for the way You surprise us and lead us on in the path of faith and life. Alleluia! AMEN

### **Other Prayer Suggestions**

**Consider praying under these headings, and pray as you feel led. The Spirit uses a willing soul, and the Lord loves an eager heart.**

- *Pray about the past, and thank God for all He has done*
- *Pray about your own past, and thank God that He made you*
- *Pray about the present, and give praise for the Kingdom*
- *Pray about your life now, and praise God for His blessings*
- *Pray about the future, and anticipate the glories of heaven*
- *Pray about your own future, and expect great things of God*

## Meditation

God has promised us joy and gladness.

Will we believe this?

Will we live by this daily?

God has promised to send His Holy Spirit.

Will we accept this?

Will we receive the gift?

God has promised to forgive those who repent.

Will we deal with sin?

Will we show we can change?

God has promised to turn our hearts towards love.

Will we let go of hate?

Will we accept the heart of Christ?

God has promised us 'the wisdom of the righteous'.

Will we value His ways?

Will we use His treasure?

What glory we have been given, what wonders are ours.

Will we be lost in disbelief?

Will we take part in God's revolution?

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## Bible Study - 1 John 2:7-14

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup> Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

<sup>12</sup> I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

<sup>13</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

<sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

## Reflections

### *Confession and Intercession*

George Buttrick lived from 1892 to 1980. He was born in England but was ordained into the Congregational church in the United States in 1915, before moving to the Presbyterian church five years later. He is well known as the minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian church in New York, where he served from 1927 to 1980, spanning a generation which saw vast changes in the world.

Buttrick was well known as a speaker and lecturer as well as a fine preacher, but he also wrote a number of well received books, notably his book entitled simply 'Prayer', from which we have taken the excerpt below, which continues on from the previous excerpt a fortnight ago. The whole book deals expansively on the whole subject, but here, he writes about the practice of prayer. He uses the technique of offering his readers 'hints' about how to better the practice of prayer in the life of the believer.

Two weeks ago, we read what Buttrick says about praise and thanksgiving, and today, we will read about confession and intercession.

*Confession to those we have wronged is sometimes, not always, wise: there are circumstances in which such confession would spread and aggravate the hurt. But confession to God, whom we have more deeply wronged, is always wise: He has understanding and love.*

*Our sin is against the Living Order, and we have neither inward peace nor inward power until we have offered prayers of penitence. Confession, like thanksgiving, should be specific. It should not be ruthless, but it should not excuse: it should set its hooks into the facts. 'I confess this sharp judgement, this jealousy, this cowardice, this bondage of dark habit, this part in the world's evil.'*

*Contrition is not an easy work: it is surgery. But, like surgery, it is not an end in itself: the wise prayer of confession always leads to an acceptance of God's pardon ... God does not wish us to remember, except as a reminder of our dependence, for He is willing to forgive anything.*

*It might be wise to rise from kneeling at this point in the prayer as a token of our acceptance of God's pardon, our sure faith in His absolution, and our new freedom in His grace. That standing erect might also symbolise both our resolve to make wise restoration insofar as we have power to mend our blunders, and our sincere renunciation of our sins.*

*Confession is incomplete without that resolve. Our will, however feeble it may be, must descend squarely on the side of a new life. Otherwise even our penitence may become a self-deceit and an abuse of God's goodness. But true confession is a cleansing of the soul.*

*Then may follow a prayer of intercession, without which the most earnest prayer might sink into selfishness. The Lord's Prayer in almost every phrase keeps us mindful of our neighbours: 'Our Father' ... 'our daily bread' ... 'our trespasses.'*

*Private intercession should be specific. 'We humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of people,' is an inappropriate phrase in a collect – which, as the very word indicates, draws all worshippers into one act of devotion, and provides a form into which each worshipper may pour his secret prayer – but it is out of place in individual petition.*

*Genuine love sees faces, not a mass: the good Shepherd 'calleth His own sheep by name.' Intercession is more than specific: it is pondered: it requires us to bear on our heart the burden of those for whom we pray.*

*Whose name should come first? Perhaps the name of our enemies. The injunction of Jesus is plain: 'Pray for them which despitefully use you.' He told us that worship is vain if we are embittered; that we should be wise to leave our gift before the altar, go to make peace with our neighbour, and then to worship. Only then can we truly worship. So the first intercession is, 'bless so-and-so whom I foolishly regard as an enemy. Bless so-and-so whom I have wronged. Keep them in thy favour. Banish my bitterness.'*

*Intercession also names the leaders of mankind in statecraft, medicine, learning, art, and religion; the needy of the world; our friends at work or play, and our loved ones. A sense of responsibility may prompt us to prepare a chart of intercession, so that day by day we may enter earnestly into the needs of the world, and not to forget nor fail anyone who closely depends upon our prayers.*

*So true intercession is specific and pondered. It is also daring: it carries on its heart-entreaty the crisis of the world. Like thanksgiving, it is not complete without our vow. Sincere prayer-in-love is never in vain.*

George Buttrick

God bless you

Paul H Ashby