

Questions as to Prayer

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Upon what Scripture ground may the "nation" be invited to pray to God for His aid or intervention (or for thanksgiving) in the present or any other crisis?

It seems evident from the book of Jonah that God deals with nations and not merely with individuals. God is "Father" to His children. He is the "Preserver" or "Saviour" of all men (1 Tim. 4: 10). He is also the "Governor" among the nations (Ps. 22: 28) who have been set in their appointed spheres by Him (see Acts 17: 26). It is also evident from the book of Jonah that when Nineveh took nationally the ground of repentance as commanded by their king God had regard to their prayer and action.

To this extent, therefore, there seems to be scriptural warrant for a national turning to God in connection with His *governmental* dealings. We do not know of any scripture which lends support to the idea that by adopting "the Christian religion" a nation may become "Christian" and therefore specially entitled to pray for God's aid. True faith without which there is no true Christianity, is individual and not national.

Is a person having been baptised and professing Christianity on that account entitled to call upon God in time of stress, apart from repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Does God listen to His creatures as such apart from faith in Christ — either in so-called worship or in supplication?

These two questions are virtually one. Psalm 107 shows us how under stress of various kinds men do cry out to God and how in mercy He delivers them. Of this the redeemed of the Lord are special witness, and if they are wise men they discern God's loving-kindness in His intervention. It is also true that anyone who is baptised and professes Christianity thereby takes *the place* of calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22: 16). Yet only repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ put the soul into right relations with God and render possible that intimate and confiding prayer which is the privilege of His children.

Evidently if men, whatever their professions may be, deliberately turn from God and cast His words behind them, He is silent to them (see Ps. 50: 16-22). On the other hand, God evidently listens to the cry of the most unlikely and undeserving, as evidenced by the behaviour in this world of the One who said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He indeed proved Himself to be "kind to the unthankful and to the evil."

What is the scriptural view of the position of persons who have not definitely repented and accepted Christ as their Saviour — either ignorantly or designedly?

Many scriptures might be quoted as an answer to this, but none more comprehensive than Ephesians 2: 1-3 and verses 11 and 12, which deal with the Jew, with his outward position of privilege, as well as the poor outcast Gentile.

At public and so-called "united prayer meetings" it sometimes happens that apparently "good earnest Christian men" pray for blessings and certain things which appear contradictory to each other — how do you account for this?

When good Christian men pray contradictory prayers one accounts for it by the fact that so frequently even Christians are woefully deficient in their understanding of the will of God as expressed in Scripture, and so frequently their vision is blurred by the world without or the flesh within, and so communion with God is but little cultivated.

And at the same time in accounting for it thus one has a chastened spirit, conscious how frequently one has oneself prayed equally contradictory prayers in private if not in public. Acquaintance with the Word of God is necessary if we are to pray intelligently. And even then we *do not know what we should pray for as we ought* (Rom. 8: 26). Yet we may make our requests known to God (Phil. 4: 6). If united public prayer is made according to God, it will be as instructed by His Word and in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20), and then all will be in harmony and without contradictions.