

The Makings of Prayer

Psalm 143:1, 2

Charlie Brackett

The first two verses of this psalm outline for us the makings of effective prayer. Notice please:

Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications!
Answer me in Thy faithfulness, in Thy righteousness!
And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant,
For in Thy sight no man living is righteous.

In these words, the psalmist pictures for us the ingredients of prayer: three characteristics of the Lord and three of the distressed supplicant.

The Lord is shown, first of all, as responsive. He is One who hears and answers. He is always there to give ear to the heartfelt supplications of a distressed soul, both able and willing to respond as a wise and loving Father.

Secondly, the Lord's answers demonstrate His faithfulness. He can be trusted in every way: to be there and give answer in time of need; to always remember and keep His promises; and to be gracious in His answers, never begrudging the gifts bestowed.

Thirdly, the Lord's answers spring from His righteousness. They are right, wisely fitted to the need of the moment without long term harm. And His answers are just, fair to all concerned and consistent with answers He has given and those He will give.

On the other hand, the petitioner is, first of all, believing. He believes there is a God and that He will hear in the time of prayer. He believes that the heavenly Father is faithful to His promises and can be trusted to answer in keeping with His divine nature as One both loving and just, merciful and right.

Secondly, the soul who kneels in prayer is sincere. He does not come with iniquity in his heart and ask God to answer in His righteousness for He knows the Lord searches the heart. God will not respond to those who pray while harboring evil of any kind.

Thirdly, the prayerful soul is humble. The mere asking that God answer in His righteousness reminds the psalmist to plead that the Lord not enter into His judgment. Even the soul which is sincere, praying with no harbored sin, is unworthy to approach the divine Being. To but speak of God's righteousness is a reminder that in God's sight no man living is righteous. The one who prays to be heard is always humble, always aware of his utter dependence upon God's mercy.