

## Ineffectual Prayer

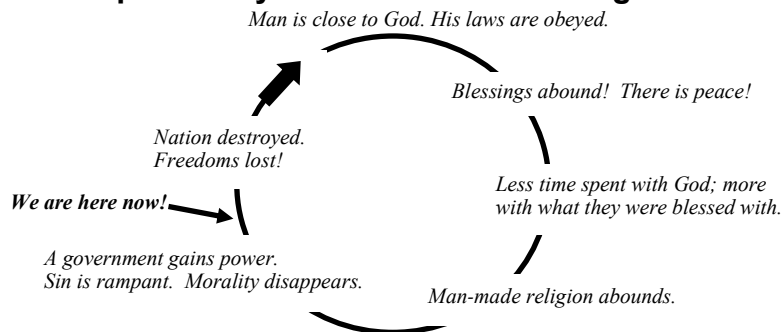
Dr. J. Hamilton

Suppose that a man takes up his pen and a piece of paper, and writes at the top of it, "To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, the humble petition of So-and-so," but there he stops. He sits with the pen in his hand for half an hour, but does not add another word; then rises and goes his way. His petition was never properly delivered to the queen.

He repeats this process day after day — beginning a hundred sheets of paper, but putting into them no express request; sometimes, perhaps scrawling down a few sentences which nobody can read, not even himself, but never plainly and deliberately setting down what it is that he desires. Can he wonder that his blank petitions and scribbled parchments have no sensible effects on himself nor on any one besides?

Many persons pass their days giving blank petitions, or petitionless forms of prayer to the Lord. Every morning they bend their knee, and continue a few moments in the devotional attitude. They address themselves to the heavenly Majesty. They call on the "great and dreadful name" of God, and they go over a few words and sentences; but they are such incoherent and unfelt sentences as a child, who cannot write, would scrawl upon a piece of paper. Perhaps they even say nothing. They offer a meaningless, empty prayer. After this form of worship, they go their way, and wonder why their prayers are not heard or answered. Other people get answers, but they are not conscious that any prayer of theirs has ever produced the least effect.

## The Spiritual Cycles of Mankind Throughout History



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## Why Are You Coming to Me?

Bill Brinkworth

*"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. 11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, ... 13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation."*

Judges 10:10-14

Israel found themselves facing many enemies. Being overtaken by their foes was imminent. It was then they turned to God for help.

God was not blind to the hearts and minds of His people. He knew that they were involved deeply in sin. They had gotten involved in the idolatry of their godless neighbors. Most of the time they were hoping those deities of stone and wood would help them through life's troubles.

They were trusting in false and manmade gods, rather than the only God in Heaven.

In time, when they realized their false trust availed nothing, they turned to the real God. He in turn, told them He would not help them. Since they were turning to the false gods in the past, He told them they should seek help from those deities.

Continued on Page 2

## Reasons Why Prayers May Not be Answered

Bill Brinkworth

Many do not have what they need from God because they:

**Do not ask Him.** "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." James 4:2

Continued on Page 2

## Why Are You Coming ...

*Continued from Page 1*

Many today are not much different than those Israelites. People spend most of their lives trusting in their own little gods on a daily basis. When a problematic situation arises, the first “god” many turn to for a solution is their own “wisdom,” strength, or problem-solving ingenuity. It often takes many failures before it is discovered that solving the problem themselves makes matters worse or does not really solve the situation.

Others gladly turn over an ever-increasing amount of taxes and blind trust to earn help from the government “god,” when they have unfulfilled needs. When times are hard, instead of praying to God in Heaven for food or employment, the first stop they make is at the government welfare office for food stamps or some other government assistance program. Not once had it entered into their minds to go their heavenly Provider first.

When life has thrown them a curve, and their health suddenly fails, it is not God they first seek for a cure, but a doctor’s or hospital’s intervention. By faith,

they obey whatever the medical “gods” tell them to do, and again forget to look towards Heaven for God’s guidance.

A child of God should go to Him as the first source of help to go to in time of trouble. The Lord may use government help or medical help to change your situation; but it should always be God’s direction that is sought first. It is easy to make a wrong decision, and make matters worse.

Avoid as much error as possible; go to the Lord. He has raised billions of children. His wisdom is always right, as He knows what is best. He also knows your past, your future, and what others are doing that may cause more problems. Do not guess what to do. If you are a child of God, then go to your heavenly Father first. He knows the right solution for your dilemma, and He will never mislead you.

## Reasons Why ...

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🌿 **Ask improperly; often selfishly.** “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your

“ **Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual** (adequate power or force to make a change) **fervent** (earnest) **prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**” James 5:16

lusts.” James 4:3

🌿 **Are separated from God’s help because of sin.** “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18

Also: Lam. 3:44, I Kings 8:35, Jer. 11:14.

🌿 **Ask the wrong “god.”** “Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.” Isa. 45:20

🌿 **Are praying for a situation in which God will not intervene.** “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.” Jer. 7:16

🌿 **Are hypocritical:** “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” Mat. 6:5

🌿 **Are not sincerely seeking God:** “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” Mat. 23:14

🌿 **Repeat the same prayer over and over without any meaning.** “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” Mat. 6:7

## The Religion of the World

*Dr. Bonar, 1871*

The tendency of worldly religions is to reject the blood and to glory in a Gospel, which needs no sacrifice. They want no “Lamb (*Jesus*) slain,” as is necessary, according to God’s Word.

Instead of trusting in Christ’s shed blood to cover their sins, they go “in the way of Cain” (Jude 11). Cain refused the blood, and came to God without it. He would not own himself a sinner, condemned to die, and needing the death of Another to save him. This was man’s open rejection of God’s own way of eternal life.

Foremost in this rejection of what is profanely called by some scoffers, “the religion of the shambles,” we see the first murderer. He, who would not defile his altar with the blood of a lamb, polluted the earth with his brother’s blood. Many also attempt to be accepted by God on their own merits and sacrifices, rather than trusting in the only offering God will accept — the sin-covering blood of His only son, Jesus.

**“The Aediles, among the Romans, always had their doors standing open, that all who had petitions of them might have free access to them. The door of Heaven is always open for the prayers of God’s people to Him!” — T. Watson**