

The Power and Value of Prayer

A PRAYER does not come forth from the heart unless the one who prays has a true and desperate need. There are many who pretend to look pious and humble in prayer. And so one should if it were not the bad flaw that he desires to be seen by men. During the Winter War of 1939-40, there were many ardent ones who prayed. It was natural. Then there was national distress.

In those days one earned their living with a permit. One believing man from Tuohikulma, by the name of Lauri, had traveled to a logging camp far away, where there were many workers. In those days the lodging accommodations were very deficient but regardless of this the workers were happy. The long evening hours of the winter were spent in lighthearted chatter and laughter.

Lauri was a wretched Christian. Often he found himself among the lumberjacks in lighthearted discussions. It felt and seemed like he would float along with the ungodly as pulpwood and logs mixed together drifting along with floodwaters.

It would have been easier to stay apart from their chattering if they had only known that he was a Christian. But, oh, he did not have that power to confess. In his conscience the words of Jesus sounded clearly: "Whosoever denieth me before men, him shall I deny before the Heavenly Father." Lauri was such a weak traveler on the way of heaven that he had to turn to God in prayer. Many times in the long evening hours, alone underneath the northern lights, he prayed. It was only a short prayer: "Give me strength that I, in every place and before all men, would have the strength to confess my faith."

One evening an occasion arose when Lauri was compelled to confess his faith. A discussion started about matters of faith among the lumberjacks. A few of them said they had seen Christians who forgave men their sins. Simultaneously many mouths voiced: "That office has been taken away from Jesus." Then a chorus of laughter followed.

Now God has put Lauri before a compulsion to confess. If he would not confess his faith everything would be lost. The smoldering candle would go out. The commandment given to Christians by Jesus was that a lighted candle should not be hidden. The gate to Heaven was so straight that one could not slip in secretly.

"Oh, Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifices, else would I give it."

The heart of Lauri cried. Inwardly he experienced a wonderful peace so that with a calm voice he was able to say, "I belong to that group of believers, which is now in question, and I am now before you. According to the Word of God you can judge where I am wrong."

The group that had been laughing was shocked. There was a moment's silence. The workers did not want to discuss the matters with Lauri.

It is revealed in the portion mentioned, and in the experiences of us older Christians, that God gives light, through His Spirit, on this dark journey of wilderness if we truly ask in the name of Jesus. Our strength is so weak that almost everyday we are in fiery battle against sin. In the evening when we take account of the events of the day, we surely feel again we have been defeated. Forbidden words have been spoken and deeds have been done with should have been left undone.

Nevertheless, in going to sleep in the name of Jesus, it is assuring to pray in faith: "Do not take away thy Holy Spirit."

The scripture portion referred to in the beginning says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"