

Prayer And Salvation

Joe Slater

Let us never discourage anyone from praying! By the same token, we must abide by Biblical teaching in regard to prayer, just as we would with any other subject. Unfortunately, extreme and unscriptural ideas persist about prayer.

Well-meaning brethren have affirmed that God will not hear any prayer uttered by one who is outside of Christ. They quote John 9:31, *“Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.”* Let’s ask first, *“Who said this?”* It wasn’t John or Jesus; it was a man Jesus had just healed of blindness. He was defending Jesus against the Pharisees’ charge that He was a “sinner.” What did the Pharisees mean by “sinner?” They didn’t mean “non-Jew,” but someone notoriously wicked, a rebel against God’s law. Jesus was no rebel, and the formerly-blind man knew it.

Cornelius was outside of Christ, but he was no rebel, and God heard his prayers (Acts 10:4 & 10:31). Let’s be clear: Cornelius’ prayers did not save him! God sent an angel to tell him, *“Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved”* (Acts 11:13-14).

Saul of Tarsus was outside of Christ, but God heard his prayer (Acts 9:11). Here again, even three days of prayer didn’t save Saul. The Lord sent Ananias to tell him to *“arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

One false extreme says God doesn’t hear prayers of anyone outside of Christ. The other false extreme says that one becomes a Christian by praying. Don’t be an extremist! Stay with Scripture!

What Condition Is Your Bible In?

My hobby is collecting comic books. Four factors combine to make a comic book valuable: (1) age; (2) rarity; (3) demand; (4) condition. In other words, the older it is, the rarer it is, and the more in demand it is, the more valuable the comic book will be to collectors. But the most important factor is the condition the comic book is in. Collectors grade comics on a scale of .5 to 10, .5 being in poor condition and 10 being in gem mint condition. Needless to say, truly mint condition comic books of any age are rare treasures indeed.

But when it comes to our Bibles, exactly the opposite is true. You may have heard it said, “A Bible that is falling apart belongs to someone whose life is not.” If our Bibles are in mint condition, that means they are not being studied. It means they are not being carried to church and Sunday School. It means they are not being opened to study with others. It means we view the Bible as something of a collector’s item, to be put on a shelf and just be looked at, but never read.

God gave us the Bible to be read, studied, and shared with others. The prophet Hosea lamented, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:8). The Berean Jews were praised because *“they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11).

So, what condition is your Bible in?

--Travis Quetermous (Thayer, MO)

Living In A Palace

“And who knows whether you are not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Perhaps all the young Israelite women who were captives in Persia thought Esther the luckiest woman in the world. She was so beautiful that she had been chosen over thousands to be queen. She had the best house for the king's women, and she had servants to wait upon her. She indeed was the most fortunate of all women.

But maybe all that glittered was not gold. She probably had little freedom. After all, she had not been called to go in to the king for thirty days. What kind of marriage is that? If she failed to obey the king's every wish, she probably would end up like the deposed queen Vashti, or worse.

We don't know whether Esther was happy or not in her new role as queen. But what matters is that guided by her cousin Mordecai, she saved her people. Her act of bravery did not come without fear and trepidation. After fasting for three days, she prepared to go unbidden to see the king. Her unselfish words were, *“If I perish, I perish.”*

We may not live in a palace, but wherever we are, God has work for us to do. Perhaps our Father has some special task for us to perform. Special? Yes. We don't know when some kind word or deed by us will turn someone to God. That someone might become a great worker in God's kingdom.

Who knows whether God has placed us in the right place and the right time to be of great use in His kingdom? Each one of us is important and useful to Him.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)