

## Chapter 7

# PRAYERS OF RECITATION

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10*

**T**his type of prayer might be new to many Christians, while most Catholics and Episcopalians are quite familiar with it. The most popular recitation is the Rosary that was placed into common use by St. Dominic in the 1200’s A. D. The church at that time was largely pagan in many locations because most of the members and many of the priests didn’t know how to read. So they were largely ignorant of the contents of the Bible.

The Rosary contains eight steps that are recited from memory. Some of the steps contain multiple sections and the entire process takes 15-20 minutes.

When it was first placed in use it made sense for them to memorize a few prayers, and recite them on a regular basis.

The clergy at that time were so uneducated that Dominic began his priestly order called the “Friars Preachers” to travel throughout Europe preaching and educating the clergy and the members about the New Testament.

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At that time the church didn't understand the grace of God, and didn't see the love of the Father; nor did they understand the role of the Holy Spirit. So they instituted the tradition of reciting the Rosary.

During the reformation many Christians under the leadership of educated men like Luther and Calvin decided to abandon the Rosary for various reasons, and rely upon extemporaneous prayer that we as Adventists are so familiar with.

The words of Jesus as recorded by the apostle John clearly delineate the interest that God has in each one of us, and so we reverently pray directly to the Father in the name of Jesus. In our prayers we talk as we talk to a friend. We plead, we wrestle, we struggle for the things we desire. Like the psalmist we hold back none of our feelings as we face the Father through prayer, and when it's over we might be exhausted.

However, we must be respectful to God, and remain humble. We should always follow the example of Jesus, and confess that these are our feelings, and that we willingly submit to the will of the Father.

It's an honest exchange of feelings and thought, and it's how we introduce emotion into our worship.

This is what I enjoy—an opportunity to be emotional with God. And to be emotional about other people's needs, and other people's spiritual condition.

As we become emotionally committed, our behavior for these people that we pray for increases to the point where we look for new ways to serve them, to let them see a better way as they observe our lives of peace and happiness in Christ.

This is the apostolic way. If you examine the life of St. Paul,

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you will find this is what he did. This is how we grow in Christ. Living a life of service as fruit resulting from prayer and study is what it's all about.

So, let's return to our subject of recitational prayer because there is a purpose and place for it in our daily Spiritual Exercise.

I use this type of prayer every day. My two favorites are the Lord's Prayer and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.

Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Thou annointest my head with oil.

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

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These are two beautiful, spiritual prayers. The one given to us by Jesus Himself, and the other by King David.

I use these two prayers as dividers to clean my spiritual prayer palette. For example, I have a list of people I pray for each day, and as I move from person to person it can get rather tedious. So, I insert one of these prayers between my various requests.

This serves two purposes: the first is to give my mind a break as I plead for various concerns. These concerns are also God's concerns. My desire is also His desire because it always involves the redemption of souls, or the request for the Holy Spirit to plead anew with someone who has drifted away from God. The second reason is to allow me to move to the next request with fresh thoughts as I think about God during the recitation.

As I recite one of these prayers, my mind is diverted to the thoughts in these prayers, and I end up praising God along the way. My mind is channeled into one or more attributes of God, so when I come back to my prayer of petition, I can think clearly. Let's face it, I could make one simple prayer and then read a list of names and be done with it in short order. But that's not for me. So I stop along the way and spend a few moments here and there to think about God and His Grace.

A short quote in the book *Great Controversy* says: "Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch." <sup>(1)</sup>

The above two sentences describe a situation that is dramatic and forceful: Prayers that include exertion; prayers that begin before the prayer. Prayers that are entered into with a denying

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of self, and only then can the person approach the Throne of Grace with logic and emotion from the heart without limit.

I love how Mrs. White describes it. The term “intensity of desire” is real, it’s genuine, and it will reflect the deepest feelings of each and every issue. This is not a politically correct recitation, but how we really feel, with no holding back. We are encouraged to express our feelings, but that’s not all. No, it continues “until every power is on the stretch,” which helps me to understand that we can pray with all our might, all our strength, all of whatever we’ve got.

This is one of the reasons why the Lord liked David. The young man of courage who came to the Lord in prayer with everything he had. He didn’t hold back, but put his ‘all’ into his dialogue with God. Fervent prayers; prayers with feeling from the gut and from the heart. But always spoken with humility and never demanding. As you read the Psalms you will understand how he felt.

There are other prayers in the Bible that are worthy of memorization:

Jesus prayer for all believers in John 17:20-26:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast

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loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Psalm 51:1-12:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

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Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”

I also like Psalm 130:

“Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

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These prayers are good models as they demonstrate how easy it is to communicate to God the Father.

We are told that “Only by constant watchfulness and persevering and almost unceasing prayer shall we be able to exhibit in our life the character of Christ or the sanctifying influence of the truth.” (2)

We have also been told that “God’s faithful messengers....are to wrestle with God in earnest prayer for a baptism of the Holy Spirit, that they may meet the needs of a world perishing in sin.” (3)

These two statements reveal an intensity that most of us don’t reach. Have you ever “wrestled” with God over an issue? Maybe my prayers should be more persevering and unceasing.

Each person follows a different schedule. Some may pray for a lengthy time once a day, while others pray many times throughout the day. But this counsel reminds us of the importance of ‘unceasing’ prayer. We need to make prayer a very high priority in our daily schedule. These words, ‘constant,’ ‘persevering’ and ‘unceasing’ are strong adjectives that need to be noticed. This requires a real commitment. This is not a minor counsel. This is big.

As the prayers increase, the genuine Christian comes to God in prayer as one comes to a friend, and that’s exactly what Jesus asked for.

In John 15:15 we are told, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Isn’t that a beautiful thought?



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We can pray to God as a friend. We don't need to go to a church priest, or to a saint, or to Mary. No, we are encouraged to talk directly to God the Father, as a friend, but with the respect that is owed.

So, I enjoy my short recitations that don't empty my mind, but restore my attitude to the greatness, honor and glory of the God to whom I am praying.

My mind is never emptied—it is never put into a position where Satan can find an entry. No, when praying, I am always thinking about what I am going to say, what I've already said, or what is in the Biblical prayer I'm reciting.

I can already hear you asking, "Then how do you listen to God?"

I listen to God, when meditating, and that's in the next chapter, so please continue reading.

### **REFERENCES**

- 1 *The Great Controversy*, page 621.
- 2 *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, page 304.
- 3 *The Review and Herald*, March 31, 1910.