

Abominable Prayers

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In the Sunday School Times we find, in answer to a question asked by a correspondent, a little story which we think aptly illustrates the heading of this article. The incident is thus related by the Times: —

“A story is told of a New England deacon, who was visited by a committee of the church, in view of his drinking habit. He met the visitors cordially, and said, in substance: ‘I’ve asked the Lord’s help in this thing, and I’ve left the case with him. I was afraid I was drinking too much; so I prayed that, if I were in any danger of that, the Lord would take away my love for liquor. But my liking for it holds good, and so I know the Lord approves my drinking.’”

We think all will allow that such a prayer was little, if any, less than insult to God. The Bible declares God’s hatred of drinking habits, when it says that no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. A drunkard is one who drinks immoderately; and this man was a drunkard, for he was drinking so much that he was getting alarmed at himself. Then why should he pray for wisdom concerning a thing that is plainly revealed? He knew he was doing wrong; he did not want to stop, and so he made conditions for the Lord, and because those conditions were such that the Lord could not comply with them, his conscience was satisfied. He had his mind made up beforehand what he should do, and might better have gone ahead without the mockery of prayer; the prayer was simply a taking of God’s name in vain, and could not be other than an abomination to the Lord.

We think no one will disagree with our conclusion on this matter; and yet there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, who are insulting the Lord in the same manner that the drinking deacon did, yet they cannot see the similarity, because the subject of their prayers is different. We have often heard people say, in substance: “I know that the ten commandments are God’s and unchangeable laws, and that the fourth commandment requires the observance of the seventh day, and of no other. I know that the Bible does not sanction the observance of Sunday. There was a time when I was considerably troubled over this matter—whether I ought not to keep the Sabbath instead of Sunday. So I prayed earnestly to the Lord that I might know my duty. I prayed that if it was wrong for me to keep Sunday, the Lord would let me know; and since then my mind has been perfectly at rest. I am in the Lord’s hands; if he wants me to keep the Sabbath, he will let the know.”

The least that we can say is, that such a prayer, offered under such circumstances, is an insult to the Lord. It is as though a child, knowing what his father had plainly and expressly commanded him to do, should turn right around and ask for some sign by which he might know that the father meant what he said. In such a case the reader can readily imagine what that "sign" would be. So God has given us explicit commands in his word. That word is all that he has given us for a guide in this life, and it is a sufficient guide, for it is able to make us wise unto salvation. That word is for a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. Of the law of the Lord it is said that it "is perfect, converting the soul," and that to keep the commandments is "the whole duty of man." These commandments are very plain, so that any child can understand them, and now for anybody to pray to the Lord to know if it is to his duty to keep them is an insult to the One who gave them.

The one who offers such a prayer virtually says: "I don't think the commandments of the Lord are sufficient guide for me; they may do for others, but I require something better." Or else he says: "I don't believe the Lord really means what he says." In either case, he turns away from the law, and treats it with contempt. Now does God hear the prayer of such? Hear what is said: "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Proverbs 28:9. Then if the answer to such a prayer comes in the shape of peace to the one who persists in violating the commandment, who has answered it? Not God, for "he cannot deny himself." It must be none other than the great adversary of the truth.

But will the Lord give any "sign" to such ones that he means what he says? Yes; numerous instances of this are given, but we will cite only one. Balaam was expressly told by the Lord not to go with the servants of Balak, to curse Israel. But he wanted to go, and so he asked the Lord if he really meant what he said. As a result, he became satisfied in his own mind that he might go, and he went. As a "sign" that the Lord meant what he said, Balaam was all but slain in the way, being saved only by his faithful beast, and was finally destroyed with the sword. Numbers 31:8; Jude 11

And so all who seek for peace in a way contrary to the law of God shall perish. "A man who wanders out from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead." Proverbs 21:16. Paul, speaking of those who deliberately turn away from the only source of truth, and try to find peace in a way that God has not appointed, says that "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12

Reader, do you want Satan, instead of the Lord, to answer your prayers? If not, then pray only in accordance with God's word. Pray, as did David,

"Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law."
Such a prayer, offered in sincerity, God will not fail to answer. And when the Spirit makes known to us "the deep things of God," and we delight in the law of the Lord, we have this precious promise: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7. "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."
1 John 3:22. Let us pray according to His word.