

HOW DO WE PRAY?

As we walk about in life we meet up with a variety of people, each having their own private view about everything under the sun. Let us turn our attention toward two groups – two groups whose personalities, indeed whose interior spiritual structures, have been formed by their attitude, good or bad, toward God, the Maker of us all.

Some there are, who, for reasons known only to God and to themselves, have chosen to walk through life alone. Their loneliness is an affliction made worse because they do not know the companionship even of the good and loving God. In times of need they have no one to turn to for help. As circumstances push them about, sometimes in a state of desperation, they seek help from God. They approach Someone quite unknown to them, so alone are they. They begin to experiment with prayer, but their experiment is without direction, and having no close friends, they have no example to follow. They pray but do not really comprehend the real function of prayer. As far as they are concerned, the purpose of prayer is a sort of contract making – a bargain struck with God: “I pray – You give!” And, as with the usual business transaction, they expect immediate results. But, being unfamiliar with the ways of the God they have recently turned to, they do not realize that God is not always so quick to answer. They do not realize that a quick answer to prayer is seldom given. They are therefore surprised, even disappointed. They feel they have done their part, that they have carried out their part of the contract. Why, then, has not the God of all goodness carried out His part of the contract? Their disappointment turns to hardness of heart and religious bitterness soon sets in.

There are times, ordinarily very rare, when God provides certain choice souls with special and extraordinary assistance. Such cases do not go without notice. The uninstructed immediately go to this information, consider it applicable to themselves, and, going from the particular to the general, consider themselves candidates for extraordinary assistance. When help fails to appear, their souls are left in a state of distress, confusion, and bitterness. Unaccustomed to the ways of our loving Father, they arrive at an erroneous conclusion that their newly developed “affection” for God, their newly found “piety”, their experiment with prayer have all been a total waste of time, energy, and hope. They quickly cast off their “piety” as they cast off dirty clothes, and it all comes to an end for them, with the last state of their souls being worse than it was at the beginning. Empty loneliness returns, and the useless “comforts” of wealth and fun and material supports return.

As we continue to move about in life, we also meet up with other certain souls, who have turned to God, but who understand the spiritual