

has, indeed, ordained the Sacraments as means of grace, but in many connections prayer is even more important than the sacraments. The Sacraments confer certain definite graces; prayer can, in some circumstances, obtain all graces. Not all Sacraments are everywhere and always of precept, but prayer is always of precept. Therefore it has been truly said: "He who knows how to pray aright knows also how to live aright." By means of prayer, man provides himself with all that is necessary for a good life. If this is so - and it is - then the following serious and weighty assertions are true. No one can hope for any grace except through prayer. All confidence that is not based on prayer is a vain confidence since prayer is the expression of love. It is by prayer that we reach the ear of God - because He has promised everything to prayer. GENERALLY, God gives no grace that is not prayed for. When He does, it is the grace of prayer itself.

Now these, of course, are universal truths. But there are certain definite things in the Christian life for which prayer is absolutely necessary. First of all, there are the Commandments of God. We must keep the Commandments if we are to be saved, but of ourselves we do not have the power to keep them. We may go so far as to say, even, that we never have the ability to fulfill them without fear of falling. Only by the power of prayer, through which we receive the necessary grace, can we hope to keep the Commandments of God in the appropriate and intended way.

Then there is the question of temptations. Who is it that does not have to grapple with temptations: temptations of every conceivable sort, temptations at any conceivable moment or place or circumstance? By our own natural strength we cannot overcome temptations! However, temptations are not so great that we cannot pray. We are weak only because we do not pray. The saints were victorious because they prayed. Without prayer they would not have become saints. Without prayer they would have been defeated like those of us who do not pray. This is true especially with regard to sensual temptations, which more than all others make us blind to the horrible consequences of sin. Sensual temptations cause us to forget all good principles and they efface from our hearts and minds all fear of punishment. Without prayer there is nothing for us but spiritual ruin.

We cannot be saved without the grace of perseverance, either in the vocation we have chosen or in a life without sin. Without a definite intention to persevere in the Christ-life it is obvious that we cannot be saved. Perseverance in the life of grace is a special gift of God. It is a special gift of grace that, at the moment when God calls us to die, we should be found in His sanctifying grace, so that death may be to us the