

Minister's Message – June 2008

The Power of Prayer

What is prayer? Almost everyone has prayed at some time in their life. Usually at a time of trouble or distress people cry out for help to 'one' who they think is able to help them. Although the dictionary defines prayer as 'a sincere and earnest request to God, etc', the plea is not always made to the God and Father of Jesus Christ. In a Tibetan village you will see Buddhist prayer flags waving in the wind. Muslims recite prayers to Allah while others pray to their ancestors or idols.

What is the point of prayer? Why do we pray? Is prayer just a psychological crutch as secular humanists claim? In many cases they are right. Much prayer has no power because it is addressed to a god or gods that have no power, at least no power to do good.

A man of God once called upon 400 men who worshipped idols to pray to their gods to send fire from heaven. These men wielded great political power but did their gods have any power? They accepted the challenge and prayed earnestly all day. They screamed at the top of their voices; they danced about in a frenzy and even cut themselves with knives. This was earnest prayer without a doubt. But nothing happened. No fire came from heaven.

The man of God who worshipped the Lord God of heaven, a man called Elijah, prayed to God and an answer came with fire from heaven. You can read the amazing account in the Bible (1 Kings 18). Elijah said 'the God who answers by fire he is God'. There is no point in praying to an idol or a god you have made yourself, or a god of your own imagination. The power of prayer is the power of God.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray – *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*. We can and should pray to God the Father. Do those who pray to some dead person, whom they call a saint, stop to consider what Jesus taught? How tragic to hear of people praying to Mary McKillop and trying to verify a miracle done by her through this prayer. Why ask a dead person to hear your prayer and bless you when you can ask Almighty God who lives forever and ever – and what about Jesus the Son of God who lives forever to intercede for those who pray to the true God. Jesus said *if you ask anything in my name I will do it* (John 14:14).

If you want your prayers to be heard and answered for your good then pray to the only God who can hear and answer. Idols of stone and wood can neither hear nor answer. Dead people cannot hear or answer. Our Father in heaven hears and will answer your sincere and earnest prayer. When the door is open to the throne of grace, the throne of the King of kings, why go to the wood heap or to the servant's house with your request, your thanks and your praise?

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon DD