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Showers of Blessing

Prayers are an essential part of individual Christian life, and intercessory prayers have an important place in church worship. We pray for a variety of people. When we pray for students, teachers, doctors, scientists and others, we are acknowledging their efforts to make our world a better place to live. When we pray for sick people, we are identifying ourselves with their pain and suffering. When we pray for heads of government or church leaders, we are placing ourselves under their administrative or moral authority. Thus when we join in intercessory prayers in a church, it is not that we are reminding God of his tasks or prioritizing them for His convenience. We are in fact attempting to bring in orderliness in our own thinking and living.

There have been millions of people around the world and down the ages, who have derived benefits from prayer. Had it not been so, the practice of prayer would have become extinct long back.

A very simple and vivid explanation of the mechanism of prayer has been given by Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929), one of India's earliest and greatest witnesses to Jesus Christ. He likened prayer to vapour. Water vapour or moisture, is lighter than dry air, and so it rises upwards. Whatever the obstacles in its path, vapour continues to move upwards and condenses to form clouds. The clouds then move on with the winds and give copious rain to the parched earth. The rain makes fields to bloom, satisfies thirst and hunger, produces prosperity. So is it with prayer, said Sadhu Sundar Singh. Whatever the obstacles, prayer

will always rise towards heaven and reach God's throne of mercy. From there it will return to us to give us solace, peace, happiness and abundant blessings.

Two thirds of the earth is covered by the waters of the vast oceans, but this water is unfit for drinking. That is why rain water is essential for human existence. Rain, however, does not fall as a continuous stream of water. It comes only in certain seasons determined by meteorological processes. Rain water has to be used optimally for agriculture by growing crops that are suited to the rainfall patterns and it has to be stored for use when there is no rain. God has indeed promised to maintain this supply and not to let us down:

I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit.¹

I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.²

The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.³

However, we must remember that God has the keys to all storehouses of nature and his wrath can be disastrous: *Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no*

¹ Leviticus 26:4

² Deuteronomy 11:14

³ Deuteronomy 28:12

*produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you.*⁴

We must also remember that our Lord is the Lord Almighty and he can make the heavens rain not only water but other materials things too, both beneficial and destructive:

*Then the Lord said to Moses, I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.*⁵

*Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah ... out of the heavens.*⁶

Jesus told us: *Love your enemies... so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*⁷

*I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing.*⁸

There is a popular hymn that is a prayer and also holds out a promise:

*There shall be showers of blessing;
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Saviour above.*

⁴ Deuteronomy 11:17

⁵ Exodus 16:4

⁶ Genesis 19:24

⁷ Matthew 5:44-45

⁸ Ezekiel 34:26

*Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need:
Mercy drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.
There shall be showers of blessing,
If we but trust and obey;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
If we let God have His way.*

