

## ON PRAYER SAINT EPHREM THE SYRIAN

Not to sin is truly blessed; but those who sin should not despair, but grieve over the sins they have committed, so that, through grief they may again attain blessedness. It is good, then, to pray always and not to lose heart, as the Lord says, And again the Apostle says, 'Pray without ceasing', that is by night and by day and at every hour, and not only when coming into the church, and not bothering at other times. But whether you are working, lying down to sleep, travelling, eating, drinking, sitting at table, do not interrupt your prayer, for you do not know when he who demands your soul is coming. Don't wait for Sunday or a feast day, or a different place, but, as the Prophet David says, 'in every place of his dominion'.

Whether you are in church, or in your house, or in the country; whether you are guarding sheep, or constructing buildings, or present at drinking parties, do not stop praying. When you are able, bend your knees, when you cannot, make intercession in your mind, 'at evening and at morning and at midday'. If prayer precedes your work and if, when you rise from your bed, your first movements are accompanied by prayer, sin can find no entrance to attack your soul.

Prayer is a guard of prudence, control of wrath, restraint of pride, cleansing of malice, destruction of envy, righting of impiety. Prayer is strength of bodies, prosperity of a household, good order of a city, might of a kingdom, trophy of war, assurance of peace. Prayer is a seal of virginity, fidelity in marriage, weapon of travellers, guardian of sleepers, courage of the wakeful, abundance for farmers, safety of those who sail. Prayer is an advocate for those being judged, remission for the bound, consolation for the grieving, gladness for the joyful, comfort for mourners, a feast on birthdays, a crown for the married, a shroud for the dying. Prayer is converse with God, equal honour with the Angels, progress in good things, averting of evils, righting of sinners. Prayer made the whale a house for Jonas, brought Ezechias back to life from the gates of death, turned the flame to wind of moisture for the Youths in Babylon. Through prayer Elias bound the heaven not to rain for three years and six months.

See, brethren, what strength prayer has. There is no possession more precious than prayer in the whole of human life. Never be parted from it; never abandon it. But, as our Lord said, let us pray that our toil may not be for nothing, 'When you stand in prayer, forgive if you have anything against anyone, that your heavenly Father may forgive you your faults'.

Do you not see, brethren, that we toil for nothing when we pray, if we have enmity against someone? And again the Lord says, 'If you offer your gift at the altar, and there you remember that someone has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift'. Therefore, it is clear that if you do not do this first, all that you offer will be unacceptable, but if you do the Master's bidding, then implore the Lord with boldness, saying, 'Forgive me my debts, Master, as I have forgiven my brother, so fulfilling your commandment. I,

weak though I am, have forgiven'. For the Lover of mankind will answer, 'If you have forgiven, I too will forgive. If you have pardoned, I too will pardon your sins. For I have authority on earth to forgive sins. Forgive and you will be forgiven'.

See God's unfathomable love for humankind. See God's unbounded goodness. Hear instant salvation of your souls.

Source: <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/ephrem.htm>