

## 217 Before the Throne of Grace

In our two previous Reflections concerning our prayer habits, we have been reminded that prayer is a privilege and a responsibility; that God our Father, seated on His “throne of grace” (Hebrews 4.16), and others, and we ourselves, are blessed when we pray; that our prayers do make a difference; and that we come in prayer to God the Father always and only through the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, with our prayers enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

It is worth mentioning at this stage some previous Weekly Reflections which you might care to look at again – see [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org) under “Weekly Reflections by Theme / 04 Prayer and Devotional”: numbers 94 / 81 / 165 / 62 / 63, perhaps best read in that order.

When we are settled into prayer, it is helpful to have a loose structure to give us a hand if we need it, and the well-known acronym A-C-T-S is as good as any. We can think of such a structure as like one of those winches on an airfield which rapidly drags a glider up into the sky by a long cable. The moment comes when the glider is up and away - the cable has done its job so it is released to fall back down to the ground. Just so, any structure of prayer can be dropped away when it is no longer needed.

In A-C-T-S we come first in genuine, heartfelt, fresh Adoration, above all at this stage acknowledging Almighty God for Who He simply IS. Throughout our prayers, and especially at this point, there is much blessing in our just stopping and “being”, spending time consciously in His holy presence - still, quiet, open, listening, heeding His voice by the Holy Spirit. We think of Isaiah 6.1-7 when Isaiah “saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up ...”, and his reaction, “Woe is me! ...”; or of Peter and his companions on the Mount of Transfiguration, Mark 9.2-8; or of the sight into heaven granted to John in Revelation Chapter 4.

Then in repentance we Confess our sins and sinfulness, humbly asking for God’s forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. The thoroughly scriptural words in the Book of Common Prayer, of the General Confession followed by the Declaration concerning the Remission of sins, remain unsurpassed in covering what this repentance, confession and forgiveness are all about, from our side, and from the Lord God’s side.

We see in these Prayer Book words the emphasis on our need for “true repentance and His Holy Spirit, that those things may please Him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life may be pure and holy ...”. In other words there is nothing casual over our receiving God’s forgiveness: yes, it is freely

granted because of our God-given faith in Christ, but inherent in that faith is the need for our obedience to Him in our daily lives.

Our reaction, over God's forgiveness and over His many other blessings to us, is of course one of deep Thankfulness – this is when we can thank the Lord and praise Him for all His “works”, past, present and promised, global and local, corporate and personal, perhaps reaching as we do so for some of the great “Thank you Psalms”, such as Psalms 145 – 150, or some of the great hymns of praise given to us by the Holy Spirit through great saints who have trodden this Way before us. (Weekly Reflection 68 “In everything give thanks” covers this theme of our thankfulness in more detail).

Then we come to Supplication, which tends to become by default the main ingredient of our prayers unless we are careful! Yet this asking of God for His particular blessings with regard to our concerns is normal and welcome - (eg., Matthew 6.5-16; 7.7-11 / Philippians 4.6-7 / I Peter 5.7 / etc) - so we can come to the Lord with that lovely mix of humility and boldness that Abraham displays so beautifully in His prayer to the Lord over Sodom (Genesis 18.23-33): he “pesters the Lord”, “pushes his luck”, “chances his arm”, and how patient and gracious is the Lord in His response! We see from this example and so many others, both in Scripture and in our own experience, how the Lord loves to respond to our prayers.

Next week God willing we will round off these particular Reflections on prayer with some further points and examples. Meanwhile let us indeed in our prayers “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4.15).

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