PREVAILING PRAYER

BY MRS. PAUL E. KING

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They tell me I'm different. I'm overjoyed that my changed life is obvious and transparent and visible to my old friends. But, of course, I knew it would be: I don't do the things I once did nor do I go to the places I used to go to. Yes, I'm really different!
Now there certainly isn't any merit in being different just for the sake of being able to say one is different. No indeed. But when one's heart is changed, and gets fixed up like mine has been, well, that's reason enough for one's buddies to say he is different. I'm not the person I used to be. Like I said, I've been changed. Radically so.

I grew up in a home where church attendance and religious services were a way of life. My parents attended church each Sunday as regularly as the sun came up in the east, Dad going to his church, Mother to hers. And, like the hen with her chicks, we children gravitated to Mother and her church, sitting in the pew beside her every Sunday. Maybe the purely-natural mother-child bonding instinct influenced us her way; or maybe it was her deeper concern for our spiritual upbringing and welfare. Whatever it was, Mother's church became our church. Her beliefs, as taught from the Bible by our minister, became our beliefs and our standard for daily living.

My parents worked long, hard hours. We children learned the meaning and the value of work early in our lives. Several times, while working side by side with my father in the field, I coaxed him to attend church with Mother and the four of us children. He merely smiled and said he was satisfied with his church.

"But I wish we could be a family in church, Dad," I had remarked. "I miss you. The other fathers come to church with their wives and children. I wish you'd come with us."

His reply was always the same: "I'm satisfied with my church, son."

All four of us children gave our hearts to the Lord when we were small. When I entered into my teen years, I felt the need of my father's support and help more than I had ever felt it. But always he kept us at arm's length, it seemed. I longed to talk with him, to open my heart, man to man, to him; longed to tell him of some of my crazy-like, mixed-up feelings and emotions; longed to ask his advice on things. But each time I made an attempt at breaking through his shell of reserve he tuned me out and turned me off and walked away.

Our mother was patience and kindness through and through. But a fellow needs a man to talk to when he has man questions to ask. He needs a father to confide in; a father to answer his questions and a father to
encourage him. But I had none of these things, and soon I realized that I had lost the soul-peace and the rest I knew and experienced as a little boy. The road downhill was traversed at an accelerated speed after that.

My mother's love remained constant and stable; her prayers followed me day and night. I became a prodigal to my father but I remained, always, a son to Mother. A beloved son.

In spite of my sinful living, I graduated from Valley High with high grades. Immediately after graduation I enlisted in the Air Force, where I was soon in the higher echelon. Next, it was on to intense study preparatory to a government position of the strictest secrecy.

Money was now no problem for me. I was assigned to one secret mission after another. Flying became my chief mode of transportation. My life was one of excitement and daring. I had made the grade; I climbed the ladder to success and prestige and to financial security. And, I was still very young and unattached. I could do as I pleased with my money. And my life, too. One thing only troubled me: I knew my mother was praying for me. No mere parrot-like prayers; oh, no. She was praying.

I tried not to think about those earnest, pleading prayers. I honestly did. And I was pretty successful at pushing them out of my mind when I was absorbed in my orders and was fulfilling my mission. But, always, they were wafted back to me like ceaseless waves washing the shore. I couldn't get away from them, I told myself one day, so I would ignore them and treat them like I would have treated an unwelcome visitor.

It was the assignment to Turkey that shook me. Not that I hadn't been there before; I had, and I was. But, all things being like they were in some areas near, or surrounding there, I must confess that I felt the need for help from a Being higher and mightier and more powerful than I. And that's when I decided to go to church.

It was just a small church; no great cathedral and of no great architectural design either. I had seen it often on my way into town from the air base. it reminded me somewhat of the church of my childhood and I purposed within myself that I would never set foot inside its door. But now, feeling the need of God's help, I went. And of all things, they were in a revival meeting!
I was positively captivated with the singing. And the spiritual tide pulled at me like a magnet drawn to metal. Almost without realizing what I was doing, when the invitation was given for sinners to come to Jesus for pardon and forgiveness, I sobbed my way to the mourner's bench where I found peace and rest and the forgiveness of sins.

I attended every night of that revival. I was blest and happy and nearly beside myself with joy.

I invited my buddies to go with me, only to be told that they were not interested and, that within a short while I would see my "mistake" and would be joining in their fun and frolic once again. But such was not to be: I had set my sails toward Heaven and I meant to make it to the finish line this time.

I called home. Mother answered the phone. "Mom," I said joyously, "I know you've been praying a lot for me and I have something I want to tell you. Will you be able to go out to dinner with me tomorrow, God willing? I'll fly in. . . ."

"Oh yes! Yes, Paul. What time shall I meet you at the airport?"

"I'll rent a car and drive in from the airport."

"Shall Daddy come, too?"

"Not necessarily. I want to talk to you. . . ."

"What time, son? And where?"

"How about The Blue Willow at four o'clock?"

"I'll be there, the Lord willing, Paul. It's sure good to hear your voice again."

"That's a two-way street, dear Mother!" I exclaimed before telling her goodbye.
I hadn't seen my mother for quite some time, due partly to my many flying missions abroad, but, mainly, due to my fear of her prayers. I knew I couldn't
stand to hear her tearful entreaties and petitions to God for my lost soul. So I stayed away. Too, my father treated me with cool courtesy. I was a prodigal; I had disgraced his name. But now I was eager and excited to see Mother and to visit with her.

I climbed into the plane and was airborne quickly, when I was through with my work. The weather cooperated beautifully with me and my plans. The sky was clear and almost cloudless in the lower altitude and, just having been made all new in Christ, my flights became more and more meaningful to me. For one thing, I never traveled alone anymore; Jesus was my constant Companion and my best and dearest Friend.

I talked to the Lord as I flew; meditated, too. Over and over, I heard His voice. Oh, not audibly, but in the inner recesses of my soul, He spoke to me: I should stop doing this, leave off that; begin putting on; witness more. And to each and every softly-whispered thing, my heart and I gave a joyous "Amen." My greatest and deepest desire was to please Him. Only Him!

I felt truly excited as I brought the plane down for landing. I was anxious to see Mother; anxious for her to see me. This visit would be most enjoyable, I knew: I didn't dread seeing Mother and knowing that I was, mainly, the cause and the reason for her long hours of intercessory praying. No, this time I was eager to see her dear face.

It didn't take long for me to drive from the airport to The Blue Willow restaurant, with its accompanying "Gift Shoppe" and "Deitch Land Bake Oven and Confectionery Delight" store. When I saw my mother, I thought my heart would jump out of my chest, so excited and happy was I to see that dear, sweet face and form. She had given so much love to me... constant, unchanging, fervent love. This, in spite of my sinful and prodigal behavior. If she was ashamed of me, I never knew it. Always, she would say, "You will come Home, dear boy. I have God's promise. And what a blessing you will be then!"

Tears wet my eyes and my cheeks as we rushed into each other's arms; hers mingled and mixed with mine.

"It's sure good to see you, Mom!" I finally exclaimed.

"And that's what I can say, too, dear Son. It's been a long time. . . ."
"Too long, really," I answered, feeling grieved over my neglect for and toward the only person on earth who loved me in spite of my waywardness and my willful neglect of her.

I guided her toward the dining room, gently and lovingly, treating and handling her more like a rare piece of Dresden China than the hardworking woman she was.

At the table to which we were assigned, I bestowed upon her all the courtesies which she had taught all four of us children, and for a brief moment I thought she looked a bit amused.

"You must be hungry, dear," she finally said. "I scurried around like a busy baker after you called. I have a box in the car; some of your favorite goodies to take back with you."

"Oh, Mother, you should not have done that!" I declared, reaching across the table and squeezing her hands. They were still work-worn looking and rough, I noticed. Tears fell from my eyes. What beautiful hands Mother had! Hands of kindness and gentleness and love and helpfulness!

"You're the most wonderful mother in the world," I told her suddenly, realizing that I had never ever told her that before.

Tears filled her eyes. Her voice quivered and trembled with emotion as she said, "Th . . . thank you, dear son. Those are the most beautiful words you have ever spoken to me. A . . . a mother can be so . . . so very sentimental, you know."

"But I mean it, Mother. From the bottom of my heart, I mean it. Do you mind if we just sit and talk for a while before I order for us?"

"Oh, no, dear. No! Just seeing you, and being with you, is far more wonderful than any food you could put before me."

"Thanks, Mom. I'll tell the waitress to come back later on to take our order."
"You're different," Mother ventured cautiously, when I returned to the table. "You take my memory back many years . . . twenty-five to be exact . . . when you were a happy little boy. A happy Christian boy."

I grabbed Mom's hand. "That's why I'm here," I told her with a smile. "I got saved! Oh, Mother, Mother, I'm so happy I feel like I can hardly contain myself. And I wanted you to be the first of my family to hear the wonderful news. Your prayers won out; they prevailed. Praise the Lord!"

Mother looked at me with a knowing, steady gaze.

Then she said, "May I do something, please?" "Of course, Mom."

"Will I embarrass you if I hug you now? Right here in the restaurant? I'm so happy that I've got to do something."

"Please do! I'm changed. Changed!"

Mother came over to my chair and wrapped me in her arms. She wet my hair with her tears. I felt like I was in an angel's presence.

"Thank God for your prevailing prayers!" I remarked, totally unabashed and unashamed by the onlookers. Truth of the matter was, I would have loved to have shouted that she was my mother and that, because of her "effectual" praying, I was lifted out of the pit of sin and was converted. Born again. By the precious Blood of Jesus.