

Matthew
6:9-13

Date written: March 24, 1950

Theme: Our Faith in Prayer

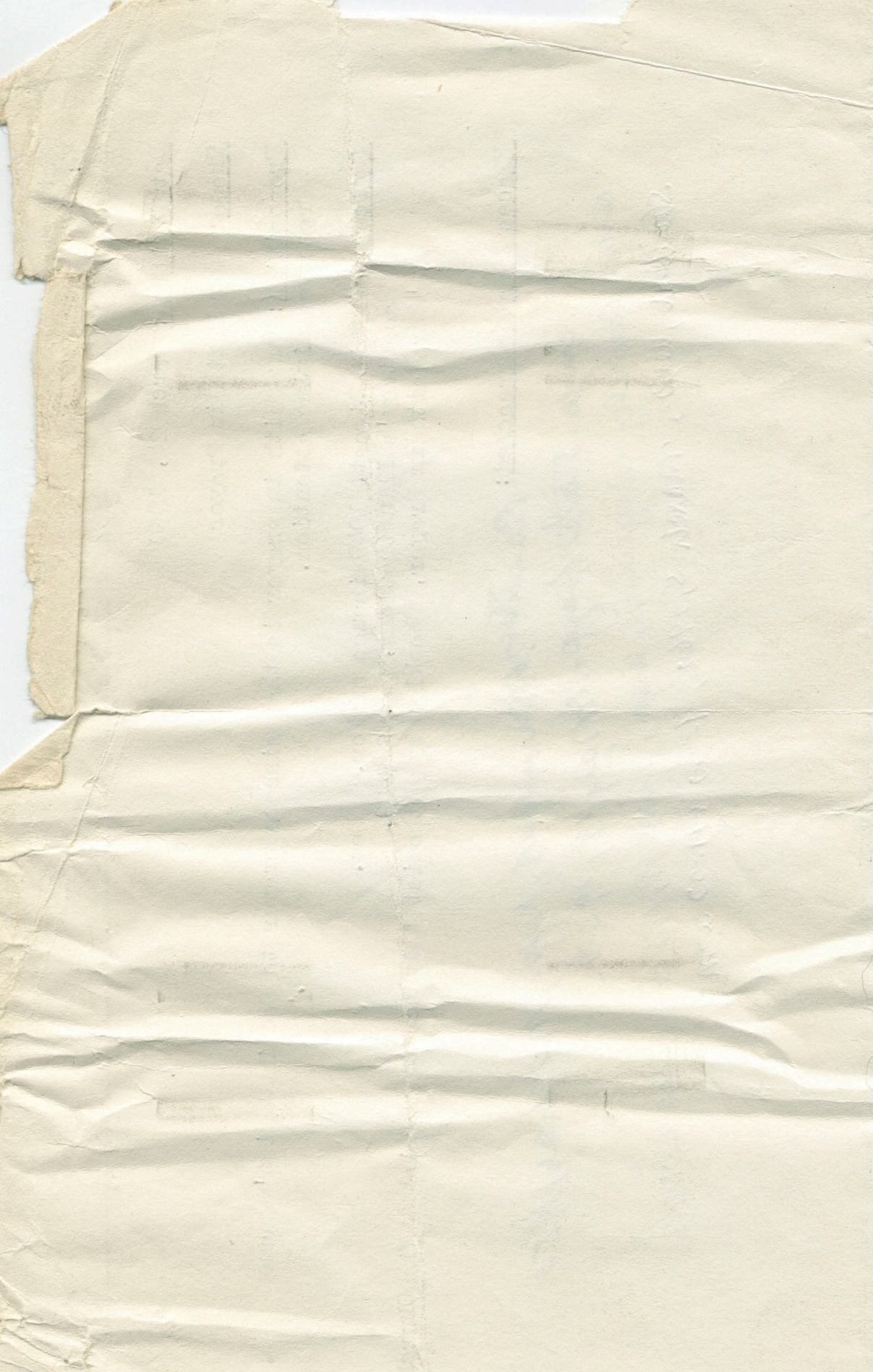
Proposition: Our Faith in prayer is that sincere prayer to God in Christ's name receives divine attention.

Source: Pulpit Digest, 1949 issues of Nov. & Dec.
Macartney's Illustrations, pp. 267-72.

"Our Faith in Prayer," booklet by Methodist "Advance for Christ & His Church."

Places & dates preached:

Claustonia, Kennemer, Wyo., March 26, 1950
Wyo. State Hosp., May 14, 1950.
Grace Church, Cheyenne, Wyo., June 8, 1950 (11:00 a.m.)
Stanford, Wyo., March 5, 1960, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.



2
Introduction:

1. Illustrations of prayer:

- a. A child praying for recovery of sick parents.
- b. A parent praying for safety of a child away or at war.
- c. Shipwrecked men in a life boat at sea.
- d. A Christian praying for the conversion of a sinner.

2. All of these are praying to God, and all illustrate the importance of prayer life.

3. The purpose here is to think about our faith in prayer.

I. The Nature of Prayer. The model prayer was given by Jesus in our Scripture. It contains at least 6 main areas with which prayer should be concerned. Those given in "Our Faith in Prayer" booklet are the ones we are mentioning.

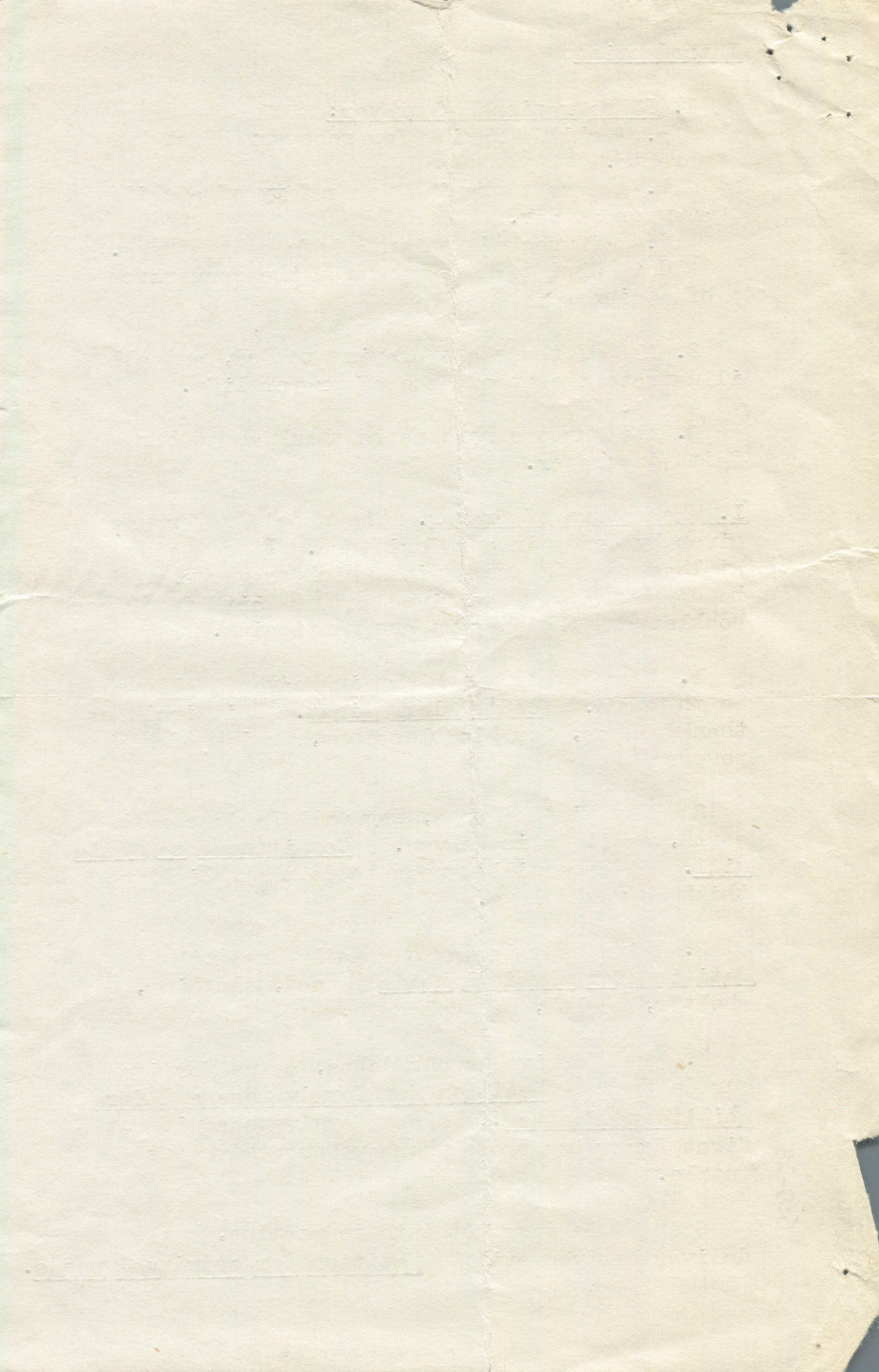
1. "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." God's glory first. This includes thankfulness, for his blessings, praise of his powers.

2. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Commitment to God's will. Sincere willingness to do that which we think He would have.

3. "Give us this day our daily bread." Petition for physical needs. Food, clothing, shelter, health, medical care.

4. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Petition for forgiveness and for ability to forgive. To ask forgiveness without first forgiving those who have wronged us is futile.

5. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Petition for spiritual needs.



3
Knowing our own weaknesses we fear to meet temptation. Therefore, please give aid and guard us from meeting it unnecessarily. When we fall into evil, whatever its nature, let us go safely through.

6! "For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen." Expression of assurance that He can do all that is asked and will do what is best.

7. To this outline of the nature of prayer, as given in the Lord's Prayer, should be added one further thing. We usually end our prayers with the phrase "In Jesus' name." This means that we believe that He intercedes in our behalf with God, and that we must pray in a spirit similar to His; a spirit of humility, complete trust, and of true sincerity. To pray without the spirit of Christ is useless; and like talking to a person but using a language he can't understand.

II. Methods of prayer.

1. Public. Important because draws group together in common petition and reverence. But individual who leads group publicly in prayer must be sincere, and have personal spiritual life.

2. Private.

a. Regular times, as grace at meals, bedtime or morning prayer.

b. Spontaneous inner prayer at any time. Speaking to God as to a friend; only in one's mind instead of vocally.

c. Reverent attitude. For some this is kneeling. Others simply bowing head and shutting eyes. Others have no particular outward expression. That way which most suggests reverence to the individual is the important one.

4

3. Guided prayer. Guidance can be used for both public and private prayer. It doesn't mean word-for-word copying of printed guides; but use of these helps does stimulate ones thought and give variety and new and higher reaches in prayer. As personal study and experience is brought to a conversation between friends, and helps enrich and enlarge that conversation, so study and guidance for us helps us in better understanding God. Sunch guidnace is found in the Bible, in guides like Upper Room, and other pryaer manuals; collections of prayers; and devotional literature.

III. Answers to prayer.

1. Unanswered prayer.

a. In his Confessions Augustine relates how he set out for Rome from Carthage against the prayers and entreaties of his godly mother, who was praying earnestly for his salvation. Augustine deceived her when she was weeping over him by telling her that he was merely going on board to see a friend who was sailing for Italy. When his mother refused to go home without him, he persuaded her to pass the night in a memorial chapel of the martyr Cyprian. But that night while his mother Monica was praying in the chapel, beseeching God to prevent him from going, Augustine set sail.

This departure of her son must have seemed to Monica at that time the refusal to grant her prayer; yet in the providence of God the journey to Italy was to be the means of Augustine's conversion. The denial of the mother's prayer was in the end a great answer to her prayer for the salvation of her gifted son.

#Here we have a striking and beautiful illustration of how God sometimes answers a pryaer for the salvation of a soul, after what seems, to the one who prays, a long delay.

5

b. Wrong kind of prayer. On the wilderness journey the people of Israel had been saved from starvation by the manna which fell for them from heaven. But they began to weary of it and lusted for the fleshpots of Egypt, saying: "Who shall give us flesh to eat? --our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all save this manna to look upon." (Num. 11:4,6). The answer of the Lord to this complaint and ingratitude was to give them as a judgment that for which they asked. A wind blowing in from the sea covered the ground about Israel's camp with quails. For a night and two days the greedy, flesh-lusting people gathered the quails and ate them; but while the flesh was yet between their teeth God smote the people with a great plague. The place where the victims of the plague were buried was called the Graves of Lust. God let them have the quails for which they asked, but with them he sent the plague. In Ps. 106:15 the psalmist expresses it thus: "He gave them the desire of their hearts, but sent leanness into their soul."

c. Or, again, prayer is answered in eternity where health and life and happiness everlasting come.

d. The high cost of prayer. "I want you to spend 15 minutes every day praying for foreign missions," said the pastor to some young people in his congregation. "But beware how you pray; I warn you that it is a very costly experience."

"costly?" they asked in surprise.

"Yes, costly," he said. "When Carey began to pray for the conversion of the world, it cost him himself; and it cost those who prayed with him very much. Brainerd prayed for the dark-skinned savages, and after two years of work it cost him his life. Be sure it is a dangerous thing to pray in earnest for this work; you will find that

36
you cannot pray and withhold your labor, or pray and withhold your money; ~~may~~ that your life will no longer be your own when your prayers begin to be answered.

2. Prayer is a means of help in danger.

There was once a godless seaman who was in a boat fishing with his companions when a storm came up which threatened to sink the ship. His companions begged him to offer a prayer; but he demurred, saying it was years since he had prayed or entered a church. But finally, upon their insistence, he made this prayer: "O Lord, I have not asked you for anything for fifteen years, and if you deliver us out of this storm and bring us safe to land again, I promise that I will not bother you again for another fifteen years!"

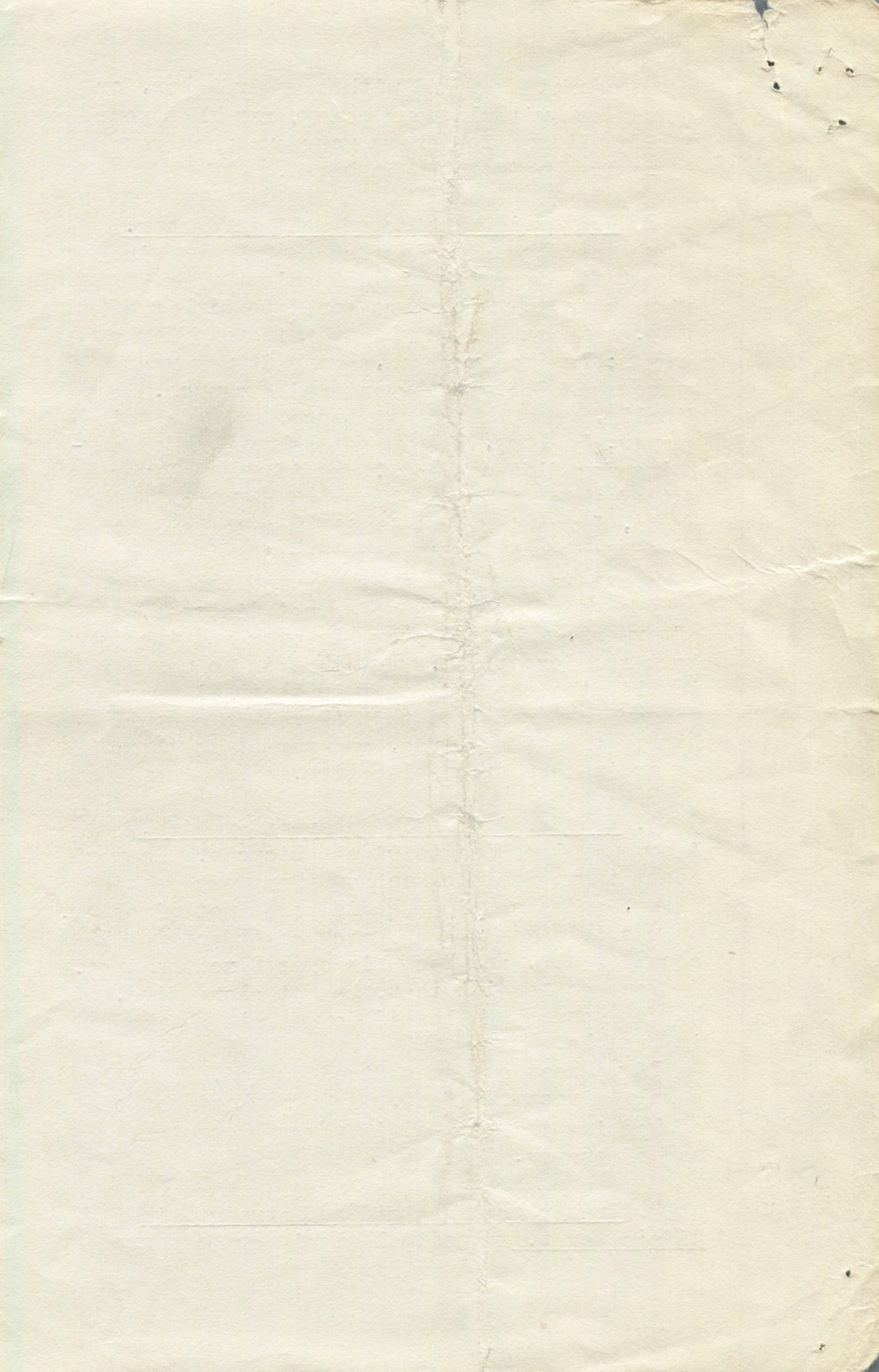
There is no doubt that many of those who pray earnestly in time of great distress, afterward, when the storm is over and the danger is past, forget God. But that in no way invalidates the fact that in their distress and danger they realized that there was a power higher than themselves, and turned to that power in earnest supplication.

3. Prayer gives help in everyday life.

A boy was learning to ride a bicycle. He would look at his feet to see how they were getting along, and each time he did so he met disaster. He was told to look up, pick an object well ahead of him, and keep his eyes fixed on that. As long as he ~~did~~ that, he got along fine, but as soon as he looked down again he was in trouble.

If we keep our eyes fixed on God, He will surely direct our feet. And the best method of keeping them on God is through constant use of prayer.

4. Prayer brings a gift of strength in life's worst. A medical missionary captured



7
by bandits in China, was informed that he was to be shot at a spot ten minutes' distance away. He tells how a terrible fear and helplessness came over him at the thought of such a death so far away from his native country, from his friends and his family. But he had strength enough to pray. This was his prayer: "My Lord God, have mercy on me, and give me strength fo this trial. Take away all fear, and if I have to die, let me die like a man." Instantly, he said, his terrible fear began to disappear. By the time he had reached the gorge where he was to be shot he felt perfectly calm and unafraid. At the last moment, however, the bandits relented and his life was spared. In the days which followed, full of danger and suffering, the memory of this experience was cherished more and more. "My own will had failed in the most critical moment of my life. But the knowledge that I could depend on a power greater than my own, one that had not failed me in that crisis, sustained me in a wonderful way to the very end of my captivity. What ingratitude it would be in me not to proclaim this power."

5. There are other answers to prayer. There are myriands of experiences of praying people to verify these values.

Conclusion: All of this leads to the conclusion that our faith in prayer is well-founded, the faith that holds that sincere prayer to God in Christ's name receives divine attention, and brings benefits which would otherwise be unobtainable.

