

# Stennis Attests to Power of Prayer in

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Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.) who was near death a year ago after a street-robbery shooting, recalled yesterday, "Out of the confusion of a half-conscious mind I reconstructed a Bible verse: 'The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'" (James 5:16).

And later in his long struggle he found that his "short, silent prayers were always a rallying point."

"It was clear to me that the easier way was to pass on," Stennis said of those days. "It was clearer that to live required a struggle, a will—a will to live, to try, to overcome obstacles . . ."

The 72-year-old senator's remarks won him rapt attention from the 3,000 persons at the National Prayer Breakfast in the Washington-Hilton Hotel. Among

those in his audience at the annual affair were President Nixon, Vice President Ford and evangelist Billy Graham.

Crediting his eventual recovery to the power of prayer, Stennis recalled, "My chief surgeon told me, 'A high hand entered your case.' Later, I knew he was right."

The senator said he was aware of prayer—his own and that of others—supporting him from his first moment of consciousness after the six-hour emergency operation at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

"My daughter was sitting by the bed holding my hand and saying, 'Daddy, people in Mississippi are holding prayer meetings and mother and I and all of us are praying that you will be all right . . .?'"

"I said to myself, 'Prayer meetings for me? Then I'm in grave danger and I may not survive.'"

A wry tone in Stennis' voice stirred a ripple of amusement at that point, and he interjected, "It's all right for you to smile, but at that time it was not a smiling matter."

Looking back at the six months he spent in the hospital, Stennis declared that "waves of compassion flowed in for many days . . . It proved to me that Americans have a great repository of faith."

The senator's testimony of his faith, followed later by a ringing confession from Sen. Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) about how his conversion to Christ had delivered him from alcoholism, set a markedly more orthodox Christian tone to the breakfast than has characterized it in recent years.

Television and still cameramen were barred, as were most reporters, in an effort by the sponsors to move the

breakfast away from the political tone it had acquired in past years.

President Nixon, who was accompanied by Mrs. Nixon, daughter Tricia and son-in-law Edward Cox, and Dr. Graham, warned that too often spiritual arrogance tempts people to tell God what they want.

He recalled an explanation offered him by his Quaker grandmother while he was a child of why Quakers rely so heavily upon silent prayer.

"What thee must understand, Richard," Mr. Nixon said his grandmother told him, "'is that the purpose of prayer is to listen to God, not to speak to him, not tell God what thee wants but to hear what he wants from thee.'"

"Now my grandmother did not believe that others who used oral prayer were wrong, because that would not have been the Quaker way," the President added. "She thought they might be right and that both could be right."

Earlier, the President teased the Purdue University Glee Club members who sang at the breakfast.

He said he had gone over

to them when he arrived at the hotel and asked whether any of them were on the Purdue football team.

"Nobody held up his hand," Mr. Nixon reported. "I said, 'That is just like me. I made the glee club, but I didn't make the football team.'" Going on to call the singers "great," the President commented that if Purdues' "football team was up to their glee club they would be in the Rose Bowl."

Members of the strongly pro-Nixon Unification Church, areligious movement founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, a Korean evangelist, called off the 2,000 young demonstrators they had said earlier would ring the hotel in support of the President.

Instead they rallied in Lafayette Park, where they were greeted later in the morning by Mrs. Cox.

Mr. Moon, who arrived from Los Angeles Wednesday, was seated at a table at the extreme far end of the hall from the speakers' platform.

Rep. William Jennings Bryan Dorn, (D-S.C.), chairman of the committee that arranged the breakfast, said he did not know who had arranged Mr. Moon's invita-

## Recovery

tion to the breakfast after the committee had decided not to invite him.

The gathering was technically sponsored by the weekly prayer breakfasts of the Senate and the House of Representatives, but most of the staff work is provided by the Fellowship Foundation, a group that also pays the bill for the 3,000 at the breakfast, Dorn said.