Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Acts 10:4.

It is a wonderful favor for any man in this life to be commended of God as was Cornelius. And what was the ground of this approval? “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

Neither prayer nor almsgiving has any virtue in itself to recommend the sinner to God; the grace of Christ, through His atoning sacrifice, can alone renew the heart and make our service acceptable to God. This grace had moved upon the heart of Cornelius. The Spirit of Christ had spoken to his soul; Jesus had drawn him, and he had yielded to the drawing. His prayer and alms were not urged or extorted from him; they were not a price he was seeking to pay in order to secure heaven, but they were the fruit of love and gratitude to God.

Such prayer from a sincere heart ascends as incense before the Lord; and offerings to His cause and gifts to the needy and suffering are a sacrifice well pleasing to Him. Thus the gifts of the Philippian brethren, who ministered to the needs of the apostle Paul while a prisoner at Rome, are said to be “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).

Prayer and almsgiving are closely linked together—the expression of love to God and to our fellow men. They are the outworking of the two great principles of the divine law, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”; and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:30, 31). Thus while our gifts cannot recommend us to God or earn His favor, they are an evidence that we have received the grace of Christ. They are a test of the sincerity of our profession of love.
The offerings that are the fruit of self-denial prompted by love are represented by the words spoken by God to Cornelius [Acts 10:4 quoted]... Who does not desire such memorials—deeds which are before God as a voice speaking in behalf of the human agent, keeping our names fresh and fragrant in the heavenly sanctuary?

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