

E. M.
BOUNDS
ON
PRAYER

E. M. Bounds



HENDRICKSON
Christian
Classics

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 *Classics*

 **HENDRICKSON**
PUBLISHERS

E. M. Bounds on Prayer

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PREFACE

HENDRICKSON CHRISTIAN CLASSICS EDITION

Edward McKendree Bounds
(1835–1913)

*To pray is the greatest thing we can do: and to do it well
there must be calmness, time, and deliberation;
otherwise it is degraded into the littlest and meanest of things.
True praying has the largest results for good; and poor praying, the least.
We cannot do too much of real praying; we cannot do too little of the sham.
We must learn anew the worth of prayer, enter anew the school of prayer.
There is nothing which it takes more time to learn.*

—*The Power of Prayer*

To look at him, no one would consider him a man of such power. He is described as a slender man, only five feet, five inches tall. He was born on the American frontier, had little formal schooling to speak of, lived through and served in a war that would scar a nation for generations, owned no property or wealth, held no church office, and died in relative obscurity. Yet Edward McKendree Bounds may well be one of the North American church's best kept secrets. During his lifetime, E. M. Bounds touched thousands of lives through his preaching, his writing, and above all, his praying.

Edward was born 1835 to Thomas Jefferson Bounds and Hester A. Purnell on Shelby County, Missouri, the next-to-the-youngest child in a family of three sons and three daughters. The young Bounds couple had married in 1823, and subsequently moved their young family west from Maryland's Eastern Shore in search of opportunity. They wound up in Missouri, where Thomas's talents created a comfortable life for his wife and six children. Rather than farm, Thomas turned to construction and local politics. Theirs was a town life, and relatively prosperous.

There is some speculation that Edward McKendree Bounds was named after William McKendree, a circuit rider—his legacy includes churches planted from the Chesapeake Bay to western Missouri—and later bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who was passionately committed to evangelism.

Edward's father died when he was fourteen, and we are left to imagine the impact of this loss on his life. But within a few years, he had studied law, passed the bar at eighteen, and was licensed to practice law. He was an ambitious young man: focused, articulate, bright, and a great communicator. In fact, his legal practice was so successful that his next career moved stunned everyone.

In 1859, at the age of twenty four, Bounds had an encounter with God that changed his life altogether. While details are scarce, this second blessing, this new and profound awareness of God's grace, caused Bounds to surrender his will to Christ and welcome a renewed sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He was gifted with the ability to communicate God's love, and knew God's call to preaching and evangelism.

For Bounds, the next step was clear. He closed his law office and began an intense regimen of Bible and theological studies. He studied the sermons of John Wesley, and read the stories of great Christian preachers, especially Jonathan Edwards' work on the life and work of David Brainerd. By early 1860 he was licensed to preach by the Hannibal Station Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and by February 1861, Bounds was a pastor of his own congregation in Brunswick, Missouri.

The American Civil War was not merely a war between states, nor did it really begin in 1861. The issues that divided the nation were not merely political or social or economic or moral. Slavery touched every aspect of life in America; people simply engaged the issue at different places. And the conflict over this practice overlapped into all denominations of the Christian church

in America, including the Methodist Episcopal Church, which itself was split apart by the issue of slavery in 1845. Out of that split came the denomination called the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

In the political arena, Missouri was a border state, where opinions about slavery were wide and varied. Though settled by slave state folks from Virginia and Kentucky, by the 1840s, Irish and German immigrants who opposed slavery moved into the state. The dissension and conflict within the borders of Missouri itself epitomized the conflict and dissension that would divide the entire nation. So the stage is set: in February 1861, Edward Bounds was a newly ordained minister in Missouri, a key state to both the Union and the Confederacy. By autumn, America was ripped apart by civil war, and Bounds was imprisoned by the Union Army, along with criminals, rebels and Confederate sympathizers.

Lincoln had sent in Union troops to make sure the state remained Union. Contrary to Lincoln's orders, these troops freed slaves and confiscated property, including the church buildings and parsonages that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had taken with them in their split from the larger body of the denomination in 1845. Anyone who objected was taken prisoner. The troops confronted Bounds as he worked in his church; it was not a building that had even existed when the denomination split, and in Bounds' view, should not have been subject to Union reclamation. The soldiers ignored his objections, and took him into custody for his denominational affiliation, saying he was disloyal to the Union.

He was badly treated—tried quickly and sent to a federal prison in St. Louis, where he spent a year and a half. But in prison, Bounds found a new congregation: he became chaplain to the wounded, angry, displaced, fearful men who'd been swept up in the chaos of this conflict.

Early in 1863, the twenty-six-year-old Bounds was sent south to be released in Arkansas, forbidden to return home to Missouri by the Union Army. He was never offered the chance to swear his allegiance to the Union, and he was not a slave holder. So even though he had two brothers who served in the Union Army, Bounds found himself, courtesy of the Union Army and his spiritual commitment to his fellow prisoners, allied with the Confederacy. He was a pastor, and he took advantage of the opportunity God gave him to serve: he volunteered for service as a chaplain in the Third Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment, pleased to once again be able to minister to fellow Missourians.

Bounds was a good chaplain and a good soldier, always marching with the troops, never avoiding the front lines. He ministered to these men, loved them, encouraged them, and suffered with them until 1864, when his regiment was decimated with thousands of other Confederate troops at the Battle of Franklin. Those left standing were captured and put to work caring for the wounded, and burying the dead in mass graves. The defeated men were then given the opportunity to be released to return home if they signed an oath of allegiance to the United States and promised not to bear arms against the government in the future. E. M. Bounds was one of the troops who signed the oath. He had nothing but the ragged clothes he wore, his Bible, his ordination papers, and his license to preach.

An experience such as this is not one that is left behind. Just as families and veterans from both sides of this conflict were affected for years to come, Bounds also came out of this experience a changed man. But unlike so many others, he did not allow bitterness in any form to take root in his soul. He never berated the troops who had imprisoned him, never disparaged Yankees or northern sympathizers, never complained about his enemies, and never sought to justify his own actions during the war.

But the singular change in his life is described by his biographer, Lyle Wesley Dorsett:

God allowed him to suffer humiliation, total loss of freedom and possessions, and he made him a pilgrim. When Bounds was dragged away from Brunswick and thrown into prison, he was stripped of his personal property and citizenship. When he was banished from his home state in 1862, he became a pilgrim who never felt at home anywhere. A sojourner who earned little money as a preacher, he was always marginally poor, unable to buy a house, and never in possession of savings, stocks, or bonds.

His spiritual life was refined in the fiery crucible of the American Civil War, and his entire life would be spent ministering to the people of the South.

At the end of the war in 1865, Bounds returned to Franklin, Tennessee to fill the pulpit of the Methodist Episcopal Church there, and to complete his unfinished work as chaplain to his regiment. He and other veterans worked with local people to properly bury and memorialize all the dead from the Battle of Franklin (1864), who'd been hurriedly buried in mass graves. They secured the land and raised the funds to hire workers, who exhumed 1496 bodies of

Confederate soldiers, then identified and reburied them. Bounds personally supervised the identification and reburial of 130 men from his own regiment, and saw to it that their names were published in Missouri papers and that a memorial was raised in their honor. And for his entire life, he carried those names, listed on a single sheet of paper, folded in his wallet. These men, after all, were part of his congregation.

Bounds stayed in Franklin for two years. After completing the reburial project, he turned his attention to the spiritual revitalization of the people. Bounds gathered around him six men who shared his own convictions about the power of prayer, inviting them to join him every Tuesday night to pray for revival. God answered their prayers. After a year of faithful praying, God visited revival on Franklin in a powerful demonstration of his love and restoration.

This revival marked the end of his work in Tennessee, and in early 1869, Bounds moved to Selma, Alabama, where he took up the work of an evangelist, often preaching at camp meetings and revivals. He also developed his gift of writing, and began writing for Methodist publications. Both evangelism and writing would become his life's work and his legacy.

It was while working in Alabama that Bounds met Dr. A. W. Barnett, a prominent Methodist minister from Eufaula, Alabama. He seems to have spent a lot of time with the family, and was especially taken with Dr. Barnett's daughter Emma (called Emmie), whom he married in 1876. Both were forty-one years old, and neither had ever been married. But they were happy, and became a great team. After the wedding, Emmie joined Edward in St. Louis, where he had taken a church. They immediately started a family, and had two daughters, Celeste and Corneille, and one son, Edward. In keeping with Bound's pilgrim life, he and Emmie moved many times in their marriage. They never owned a home, and kept their earthly ties light. Eventually Bounds was offered the post of associate editor of *The St. Louis Advocate*, a Methodist paper of the St. Louis Conference. He was an excellent writer, and the job allowed him to pursue evangelistic work as well.

Edward and Emmie's time together was cut short when Emmie died in 1884, at the age forty-nine, when her children were eight, six and two. Bounds was devastated, but continued his work and to care for his children, with the help of Emmie's family and his own. He continued his work as an editor, and did evangelistic preaching and filled pulpits for local pastors who were away. Then, nineteen months later, in 1887, in accordance with Emmie's wishes,

Bounds married her cousin Harriet (nicknamed Hattie), whose family came from Washington, Georgia. The Bounds family continued to grow, as Hattie gave birth to son Samuel in the first year of their marriage.

Early in 1890, Edward received an invitation to join the staff of the Nashville *Christian Advocate* as associate editor. He would be able to write more, and present the matters that burdened his heart to an even wider audience—the paper served the entire South. And for Hattie, Nashville was much closer to her family in Georgia. Life was full of hope and anticipation.

In July, Hattie took the children and went to be with her family in Georgia to give birth their second son, Charles. Returning home for childbirth was somewhat of a tradition in the Barnett family. On July 11, 1890, Hattie telegraphed Edward of the birth of a healthy son. Then on July 23, she wired him the devastating news of the sudden death of six-year-old son Edward. Just short of a year later, baby Charles also died suddenly. Edward Bounds had lost a wife and two sons within a span of five years.

Both Edward and Hattie were people of enormous faith, but still they could not understand what was happening; the grief and pain staggered them, but they clung to their faith and didn't falter. Eventually, they picked up their lives, and returned to the tasks of parenting and the business of living. They had two more children, son Osborne and daughter Elizabeth, increasing their family, which now included their first son Samuel, and Emmie's two daughters, Celeste and Corneille.

Bounds returned to his work at the *Christian Advocate* in Nashville, where it became clear that his church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was succumbing to the "New Theology" or modernism that had grown so fashionable in the late nineteenth century. This theology, coming out of Germany, swept Europe, England, and the United States. It challenged the veracity of the Bible, elevating reason and experience over scripture as the means of God's revelation. Modernists questioned traditional doctrines like original sin, Christ as the means of salvation, and the doctrine of Hell. And this thinking specifically challenged the Methodist heritage of holiness and deeper life beliefs. As the seminarians and ministers embraced these modernist beliefs, Bounds saw his church move away from the core beliefs into apostasy.

Bounds fought this liberal thinking both from the pulpit and through his writing in the *Advocate*. By this time the effects of liberalism were so widespread and so firmly entrenched that they challenged the very heart of the

Gospel, which is evangelism. For Bounds, this was the watershed battle. Bounds believed evangelism is a divinely ordained ministry, an office to which he'd been called in 1859, and in which he'd served throughout the war and after. Would the General Conference rejected evangelism as a legitimate office of the church? Yes. At the General Conference in 1894, it did.

With that vote, Bounds gave notice to his editor and to his bishop that he would be taking a "voluntary location"—Methodist-speak for giving up his post, his salary, his benefits, and his future pension. He walked away, with his wife and five children—away from the church he'd served for thirty-five years or so, believing that he was acting in obedience and trusting that God would take care of his family.

The Bounds family returned to Washington, Georgia, to Hattie's family home, which was a huge fifteen-room house on a hundred-acre parcel in the heart of Georgia, a home that could easily accommodate such a large family. For Bounds, this was a costly move. He left a prestigious and secure post that had given him the means to take care of his family, had allowed him to reach an audience with his writing, and had also allowed him to preach on the weekends. In Georgia, he continued to preach revivals, and to fill vacant pulpits, cobbling together a modest income. But his life was far from what any man would want or expect: to return jobless, with a growing family, to live with one's in-laws.

In Washington, Bounds was an outsider, merely the man who married the Barnett daughter. But none of this—the sacrifice, the obscurity—mattered to him. He turned to his work: preaching, writing, and intercessory prayer. He grew to love the quiet of the home, missing it when he traveled. The household was busy, but for Bounds, it became a refuge. Hattie had two more children: Mary, in 1895, and Emmie, in 1897. His oldest daughters married in 1901.

Bounds spent the last seventeen years of his life in Washington, Georgia. More and more of his time was devoted to prayer. He got up every morning at 4 a.m. to pray until 7 o'clock, when he would breakfast, then turn to studying the Scripture and to writing, both sermons and eventually, books. His work was mostly prayer, what he called the "Business of Prayerside"—three to four hours daily dedicated to praying for the sanctification of preachers, for the revival of the church in North America, for the spread of holiness among believers.

By the turn of the century, Bounds became aware that God was calling him to write books on prayer and other major spiritual themes. This was not

about creating income; in fact, he had to raise the funds to print his books. Rather this was about passing along what God had taught him about prayer. He managed to publish two books, *Preacher and Prayer* (later revised and published as *Power through Prayer*) and *The Resurrection*. Then in 1905, God brought Homer W. Hodge, another Methodist preacher, into his life. Hodge had been seeking someone to disciple him, and Bounds was looking for someone to disciple, someone whom he could pass on what God had taught him, especially about the life of prayer. For eight years, Bounds taught Hodge about praying, preaching, and devotional reading, how to study the Bible, and how to preach with power. He coached him on holiness and the deeper life and most importantly, he taught him, by word and by example, to pray. Theirs was a powerful relationship, a gift from God, anointed and blessed.

Bounds died on August 24, 1913, in his home in Washington, Georgia, with Hattie by his side, just a few days short of his seventy-eighth birthday. He died as he lived, a warrior in the service of God, from his work as a chaplain during the Civil War to standing in the breach as he fought to impede the march of liberalism.

Hodge committed himself to the publication of Bound's remaining manuscripts. This was no small task; Hodge edited and prepared for publication nine unpublished works and arranged for the reprinting of two others. He also then raised the money for publication. Through this work of love, Hodge secured Bounds' legacy for generations to come.

This volume includes three of E. M. Bounds' books, only one of which was published in his lifetime. *Power through Prayer* was published in 1907 and is slightly revised from *Preacher and Prayer*, originally published in 1902. This edition also includes *Purpose in Prayer* (1920) and *Essentials of Prayer* (1925), both titles among the nine unpublished manuscripts that were shepherded to publication by Homer Hodge.

As we read these three small volumes, we have the opportunity to become, at least for the moment, disciples of Edward Bounds. This is our opportunity to allow him to teach us about prayer, until we too can say with him, "To pray is the greatest thing we can do...."



THE ESSENTIALS OF PRAYER



ORIGINAL FOREWORD

THE work of editing the *Bounds Spiritual Life Books* (of which the present volume is the sixth) has been a labor of love which has brought great profit and blessing to my own soul. After years of close study of the literary remains of this great Christian, together with the work of other mystics, I am fully persuaded that to but few of the sons of men has there been given such spiritual power as was vouchsafed to Edward McKendree Bounds. Truly he was a burning and a shining light, and as *The Sunday School Times* says, "he was a specialist in prayer, and his books are for the quiet hour, for careful meditation and for all who wish to seek and find the treasures of God."

It was my great privilege to know the author well, and also to know that his intention, in everything he wrote, was for the salvation of his readers. *The Essentials of Prayer* is sent forth in this spirit. May God bless it to many hearts and use it for the upbuilding and strengthening of Christian character through the length and breadth of the land.

—Homer W. Hodge¹
Flushing, N.Y. 1925

¹ Homer W. Hodge, whom Bounds discipled for 8 years, edited and published Bounds' manuscripts posthumously. (See Preface.)



CHAPTER I

Prayer Takes in the Whole Man

Henry Clay Trumbull spoke forth the Infinite in the terms of our world, and the Eternal in the forms of our human life. Some years ago, on a ferry-boat, I met a gentleman who knew him, and I told him that when I had last seen Dr. Trumbull, a fortnight before, he had spoken of him. "Oh, yes," said my friend, "he was a great Christian, so real, so intense. He was at my home years ago and we were talking about prayer." "Why, Trumbull," I said, "you don't mean to say if you lost a pencil, you would pray about it, and ask God to help you find it?" "Of course I would; of course I would," was his instant and excited reply. Of course he would. Was not his faith a real thing? Like the Savior, he put his doctrine strongly by taking an extreme illustration to embody his principle, but the principle was fundamental. He did trust God in everything. And the Father honored the trust of his child.

—Robert E. Speer



Prayer has to do with the entire man. Prayer takes in man in his whole being, mind, soul and body. It takes the whole man to pray, and prayer affects the entire man in its gracious results. As the whole nature of man enters into prayer, so also all that belongs to man is the beneficiary of prayer. All of man receives benefits in prayer. The whole man must be given to God in praying. The largest results in praying come to him who gives himself, all of himself, all that belongs to himself, to God. This is the secret of full consecration, and this

is a condition of successful praying, and the sort of praying which brings the largest fruits.

The men of olden times who wrought well in prayer, who brought the largest things to pass, who moved God to do great things, were those who were entirely given over to God in their praying. God wants, and must have, all that there is in man, in answering his prayers. He must have whole-hearted men through whom to work out his purposes and plans concerning men. God must have men in their entirety. No double-minded man need apply. No vacillating man can be used. No man with a divided allegiance to God, and the world and self, can do the praying that is needed.

Holiness is wholeness, and so God wants holy men, men whole-hearted and true, for his service and for the work of praying. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." These are the sort of men God wants for leaders of the hosts of Israel, and these are the kind out of which the praying class is formed.

Man is a trinity in one, and yet man is neither a trinity nor a dual creature when he prays, but a unit. Man is one in all the essentials and acts and attitudes of piety. Soul, spirit, and body are to unite in all things pertaining to life and godliness.

The body, first of all, engages in prayer, since it assumes the praying attitude in prayer. Prostration of the body becomes us in praying, as well as prostration of the soul. The attitude of the body counts much in prayer, although it is true that the heart may be haughty and lifted up, and the mind listless and wandering, and the praying a mere form, even while the knees are bent in prayer.

Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day in prayer. Solomon kneeled in prayer at the dedication of the temple. Our Lord in Gethsemane prostrated himself in that memorable season of praying just before his betrayal. Where there is earnest and faithful praying, the body always takes on the form most suited to the state of the soul at the time. The body, that far, joins the soul in praying.

The entire man must pray. The whole man—life, heart, temper, mind, are in it. Each and all join in the prayer exercise. Doubt, double-mindedness, division of the affections, are all foreign to the closet character and conduct—undefiled,

made whiter than snow, are mighty potencies, and are the most seemly beauties for the closet hour, and for the struggles of prayer.

A loyal intellect must conspire and add the energy and fire of its undoubting and undivided faith to that kind of an hour, the hour of prayer. Necessarily the mind enters into the praying. First of all, it takes thought to pray. The intellect teaches us we ought to pray. By serious thinking beforehand, the mind prepares itself for approaching a throne of grace. Thought goes before entrance into the closet and prepares the way for true praying. It considers what will be asked for in the closet hour. True praying does not leave to the inspiration of the hour, what will be the requests of that hour. As praying is asking for something definite of God, so, beforehand, the thought arises—"What shall I ask for at this hour?" All vain and evil and frivolous thoughts are eliminated, and the mind is given over entirely to God, thinking of him, of what is needed, and what has been received in the past. By every token, prayer, in taking hold of the entire man, does not leave out the mind. The very first step in prayer is a mental one. The disciples took that first step when they said unto Jesus at one time, "Lord, teach us to pray." We must be taught through the intellect, and just in so far as the intellect is given up to God in prayer, will we be able to learn well and readily the lesson of prayer.

Paul spreads the nature of prayer over the whole man. It must be so. It takes the whole man to embrace in its god-like sympathies the entire race of man—the sorrows, the sins, and the death of Adam's fallen race. It takes the whole man to run parallel with God's high and sublime will in saving mankind. It takes the whole man to stand with our Lord Jesus Christ as the one mediator between God and sinful man. This is the doctrine Paul teaches in his prayer-directory in the second chapter of his first epistle to Timothy.

Nowhere does it appear so clearly that it requires the entire man—in all departments of his being—to pray, than in this teaching of Paul. It takes the whole man to pray till all the storms which agitate his soul are calmed to a great calm, till the stormy winds and waves cease, as by a Godlike spell. It takes the whole man to pray till cruel tyrants and unjust rulers are changed in their natures and lives, as well as in their governing qualities, or till they cease to rule. It requires the entire man in praying till high and proud and unspiritual ecclesiastics become gentle, lowly, and religious, till godliness and gravity bear rule in church and in state, in home and in business, in public as well as in private life.

It is man's business to pray; and it takes manly men to do it. It is godly business to pray, and it takes godly men to do it. And it is godly men who give over themselves entirely to prayer. Prayer is far-reaching in its influence and in its gracious effects. It is intense and profound business which deals with God and his plans and purposes, and it takes whole-hearted men to do it. No half-hearted, half-brained, half-spirited effort will do for this serious, all-important, heavenly business. The whole heart, the whole brain, the whole spirit, must be in the matter of praying, which is so mightily to affect the characters and destinies of men.

The answer of Jesus to the scribe as to what was the first and greatest commandment was as follows:

The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

In one word, the entire man without reservation must love God. So it takes the same entire man to do the praying which God requires of men. All the powers of man must be engaged in it. God cannot tolerate a divided heart in the love he requires of men, neither can he bear with a divided man in praying.

In the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, the Psalmist teaches this very truth in these words:

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

It takes whole-hearted men to keep God's commandments, and it demands the same sort of men to seek God. These are they who are counted "blessed." Upon these whole-hearted ones, God's approval rests.

Bringing the case closer home to himself, the Psalmist makes this declaration as to his practice: "With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander from thy commandments."

And further on, giving us his prayer for a wise and understanding heart, he tells us his purposes concerning the keeping of God's law: "Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Just as it requires a whole heart given to God to gladly and fully obey God's commandments, so it takes a whole heart to do effectual praying.

Because it requires the whole man to pray, praying is no easy task. Praying is far more than simply bending the knee and saying a few words by rote.

The Essentials of Prayer: Prayer Takes in the Whole Man

*'Tis not enough to bend the knee,
And words of prayer to say;
The heart must with the lips agree,
Or else we do not pray.*

Praying is no light and trifling exercise. While children should be taught early to pray, praying is no child's task. Prayer draws upon the whole nature of man. Prayer engages all the powers of man's moral and spiritual nature. It is this which explains somewhat the praying of our Lord described as in Hebrews 5:7:

Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.

It takes only a moment's thought to see how such praying of our Lord drew mightily upon all the powers of his being, and called into exercise every part of his nature. This is the praying which brings the soul close to God and which brings God down to earth.

Body, soul and spirit are taxed and brought under tribute to prayer. David Brainerd makes this record of his praying:

"God enabled me to agonize in prayer till I was wet with perspiration, though in the shade and in a cool place."

The Son of God in Gethsemane was in an agony of prayer, which engaged his whole being:

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, "Pray ye, that ye enter not into temptation." And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." And there appeared an angel unto him, from Heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. —Luke 22:40–44.

Here was praying which laid its hands on every part of our Lord's nature, which called forth all the powers of his soul, his mind and his body. This was praying which took in the entire man.

Paul was acquainted with this kind of praying. In writing to the Roman Christians, he urges them to pray with him after this fashion:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

The words, "strive together with me," tells of Paul's praying, and how much he put into it. It is not a docile request, not a little thing, this sort of praying, this "striving with me." It is of the nature of a great battle, a conflict to win, a great battle to be fought. The praying Christian, as the soldier, fights a life-and-death struggle. His honor, his immortality, and eternal life are all in it. This is praying as the athlete struggles for the mastery, and for the crown, and as he wrestles or runs a race. Everything depends on the strength he puts in it. Energy, ardor, swiftness, every power of his nature is in it. Every power is quickened and strained to its very utmost. Littleness, half-heartedness, weakness and laziness are all absent.

Just as it takes the whole man to pray successfully, so in turn the whole man receives the benefits of such praying. As every part of man's complex being enters into true praying, so every part of that same nature receives blessings from God in answer to such praying. This kind of praying engages our undivided hearts, our full consent to be the Lord's, our whole desires.

God sees to it that when the whole man prays, in turn the whole man shall be blessed. His body takes in the good of praying, for much praying is done specifically for the body. Food and raiment, health and bodily vigor, come in answer to praying. Clear mental action, right thinking, an enlightened understanding, and safe reasoning powers, come from praying. Divine guidance means God so moving and impressing the mind, that we shall make wise and safe decisions. "The meek will he guide in judgment."

Many a praying preacher has been greatly helped just at this point. The unction of the Holy One which comes upon the preacher invigorates the mind, loosens up thought and gives utterance. This is the explanation of former days, when men of very limited education had such wonderful liberty of the Spirit in praying and in preaching. Their thoughts flowed as a stream of water. Their entire intellectual machinery felt the impulse of the divine Spirit's gracious influences.

And, of course, the soul receives large benefits in this sort of praying. Thousands can testify to this statement. So we repeat, that as the entire man comes into play in true, earnest effectual praying, so the entire man, soul, mind and body, receives the benefits of prayer.



CHAPTER 2

Prayer and Humility

If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's grandest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot—the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will, and with equal joy they would lift a Lazarus in his rags to Abraham's bosom, or be a chariot of fire to carry an Elijah home.

—John Newton



To be humble is to have a low estimate of one's self. It is to be modest, lowly, with a disposition to seek obscurity. Humility retires itself from the public gaze. It does not seek publicity nor hunt for high places, neither does it care for prominence. Humility is retiring in its nature. Self-abasement belongs to humility. It is given to self-depreciation. It never exalts itself in the eyes of others nor even in the eyes of itself. Modesty is one of its most prominent characteristics.

In humility there is the total absence of pride, and it is at the very farthest distance from anything like self-conceit. There is no self-praise in humility. Rather it has the disposition to praise others. "In honor preferring one another." It is not given to self-exaltation. Humility does not love the uppermost

seats and aspire to the high places. It is willing to take the lowliest seat and prefers those places where it will be unnoticed. The prayer of humility is after this fashion:

*Never let the world break in,
Fix a mighty gulf between;
Keep me humble and unknown,
Prized and loved by God alone*

Humility does not have its eyes on self, but rather on God and others. It is poor in spirit, meek in behavior, lowly in heart. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

The parable of the Pharisee and publican is a sermon in brief on humility and self-praise. The Pharisee, given over to self-conceit, wrapped up in himself, seeing only his own self-righteous deeds, catalogues his virtues before God, despising the poor publican who stands afar off. He exalts himself, gives himself over to self-praise, is self-centered, and goes away unjustified, condemned and rejected by God.

The publican sees no good in himself, is overwhelmed with self-depreciation, far removed from anything which would take any credit for any good in himself, does not presume to lift his eyes to Heaven, but with downcast countenance smites himself on his breast, and cries out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Our Lord with great preciseness gives us the sequel of the story of these two men, one utterly devoid of humility, the other utterly submerged in the spirit of self-depreciation and lowliness of mind.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luke 18:14

God puts a great price on humility of heart. It is good to be clothed with humility as with a garment. It is written, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." That which brings the praying soul near to God is humility of heart. That which gives wings to prayer, is lowliness of mind. That which gives ready access to the throne of grace is self-depreciation. Pride, self-esteem, and self-praise effectually shut the door of prayer. He who would come to God must approach him with self hid from his eyes. He must not be

puffed-up with self-conceit, nor be possessed with an over-estimate of his virtues and good works.

Humility is a rare Christian grace, of great price in the courts of Heaven, entering into and being an inseparable condition of effectual praying. It gives access to God when other qualities fail. It takes many descriptions to describe it, and many definitions to define it. It is a rare and retiring grace. Its full portrait is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayers must be set low before they can ever rise high. Our prayers must have much of the dust on them before they can ever have much of the glory of the skies in them. In our Lord's teaching, humility has such prominence in his system of religion, and is such a distinguishing feature of his character, that to leave it out of his lesson on prayer would be very unseemly, would not comport with his character, and would not fit into his religious system.

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican stands out in such bold relief that we must again refer to it. The Pharisee seemed to be inured to prayer. Certainly he should have known by that time how to pray, but alas! like many others, he seemed never to have learned this invaluable lesson. He leaves business and business hours, and walks with steady and fixed steps up to the house of prayer. The position and place are well-chosen by him. There is the sacred place, the sacred hour, and the sacred name, each and all invoked by this seemingly praying man. But this praying ecclesiastic, though schooled to prayer, by training and by habit, prays not. Words are uttered by him, but words are not prayer. God hears his words only to condemn him. A death-chill has come from those formal lips of prayer—a death-curse from God is on his words of prayer. A solution of pride has entirely poisoned the prayer offering of that hour. His entire praying has been impregnated with self-praise, self-congratulation, and self-exaltation. That season of temple going has had no worship whatever in it.

On the other hand, the publican, smitten with a deep sense of his sins and his inward sinfulness, realizing how poor in spirit he is, how utterly devoid of anything like righteousness, goodness, or any quality which would commend him to God, his pride within utterly blasted and dead, falls down with humiliation and despair before God, while he utters a sharp cry for mercy for his sins and his guilt. A sense of sin and a realization of utter unworthiness has fixed the roots of humility deep down in his soul, and has oppressed self

and eye and heart, downward to the dust. This is the picture of humility against pride in praying. Here we see by sharp contrast the utter worthlessness of self-righteousness, self-exaltation, and self-praise in praying, and the great value, the beauty and the divine commendation which comes to humility of heart, self-depreciation, and self-condemnation when a soul comes before God in prayer.

Happy are they who have no righteousness of their own to plead and no goodness of their own of which to boast. Humility flourishes in the soil of a true and deep sense of our sinfulness and our nothingness. Nowhere does humility grow so rankly and so rapidly and shine so brilliantly, as when it feels all guilty, confesses all sin, and trusts all grace. "I, the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me." That is praying ground, the ground of humility, low down, far away seemingly, but in reality brought nigh by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God dwells in the lowly places. He makes such lowly places really the high places to the praying soul.

*Let the world their virtue boast,
Their works of righteousness;
I, a wretch undone and lost,
Am freely saved by grace;*

*Other tide I disclaim,
This, only this, is all my plea,
I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.*

Humility is an indispensable requisite of true prayer. It must be an attribute, a characteristic of prayer. Humility must be in the praying character as light is in the sun. Prayer has no beginning, no ending, no being, without humility. As a ship is made for the sea, so prayer is made for humility, and so humility is made for prayer.

Humility is not abstraction from self, nor does it ignore thought about self. It is a many-phased principle. Humility is born by looking at God, and his holiness, and then looking at self and man's unholiness. Humility loves obscurity and silence, dreads applause, esteems the virtues of others, excuses their faults with mildness, easily pardons injuries, fears contempt less and less, and sees baseness and falsehood in pride. A true nobleness and greatness are in humility. It knows and reveres the inestimable riches of the Cross, and

the humiliations of Jesus Christ. It fears the luster of those virtues admired by men, and loves those that are more secret and which are prized by God. It draws comfort even from its own defects, through the abasement which they occasion. It prefers any degree of compunction before all light in the world.

Somewhat after this order of description is that definable grace of humility, so perfectly drawn in the publican's prayer, and so entirely absent from the prayer of the Pharisee. It takes many sittings to make a good picture of it.

Humility holds in its keeping, the very life of prayer. Neither pride nor vanity can pray. Humility, though, is much more than the absence of vanity and pride. It is a positive quality, a substantial force, which energizes prayer. There is no power in prayer to ascend without it. Humility springs from a lowly estimate of ourselves and of our deservings. The Pharisee prayed not, though well schooled and habituated to pray, because there was no humility in his praying. The publican prayed, though banned by the public and receiving no encouragement from church sentiment, because he prayed in humility. To be clothed with humility is to be clothed with a praying garment. Humility is just *feeling* little, because we *are* little. Humility is realizing our unworthiness because we are unworthy, the feeling and declaring ourselves sinners, because we are sinners. Kneeling well becomes us as the attitude of prayer, because it betokens humility.

The Pharisee's proud estimate of himself and his supreme contempt for his neighbor closed the gates of prayer to him, while humility opened wide those gates to the defamed and reviled publican.

That fearful saying of our Lord about the works of big, religious workers in the latter part of the Sermon on the Mount, is called out by proud estimates of work and wrong estimates of prayer:

Many shall say unto me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Humility is the first and last attribute of Christly religion, and the first and last attribute of Christly praying. There is no Christ without humility. There is no praying without humility. If thou wouldst learn well the art of praying, then learn well the lesson of humility.

How graceful and imperative does the attitude of humility become to us! Humility is one of the unchanging and exacting attitudes of prayer. Dust, ashes, earth upon the head, sackcloth for the body, and fasting for the appetites, were the symbols of humility for the Old Testament saints. Sackcloth, fasting and ashes brought Daniel a lowliness before God, and brought Gabriel to him. The angels are fond of the sackcloth-and-ashes men.

How lowly the attitude of Abraham, the friend of God, when pleading for God to stay his wrath against Sodom! "Which am but sackcloth and ashes." With what humility does Solomon appear before God! His grandeur is abased, and his glory and majesty are retired as he assumes the rightful attitude before God: "I am but a little child, and know not how to go out or to come in."

The pride of *doing* sends its poison all through our praying. The same pride of *being* infects all our prayers, no matter how well-worded they may be. It was this lack of humility, this self-applauding, this self-exaltation, which kept the most religious man of Christ's day from being accepted of God. And the same thing will keep us in this day from being accepted of Him.

O, that now I might decrease!
O, that all I am might cease!
Let me into nothing fall!
Let my Lord be all in all.



CHAPTER 3

Prayer and Devotion

Once as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, (as my manner commonly had been to walk for divine contemplation and prayer), I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God. As near as I can judge, this continued about an hour; and kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud . . . I felt an ardency of soul to be what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to love him with a holy and pure love; to serve and follow him; to be perfectly sanctified and made pure with a divine and heavenly purity. —Jonathan Edwards



Devotion has a religious signification. The root of devotion is to devote to a sacred use. So that devotion in its true sense has to do with religious worship. It stands intimately connected with true prayer. Devotion is the particular frame of mind found in one entirely devoted to God. It is the spirit of reverence, of awe, of godly fear. It is a state of heart which appears before God in prayer and worship. It is foreign to everything like lightness of spirit, and is opposed to levity and noise and bluster. Devotion dwells in the realm of quietness and is still before God. It is serious, thoughtful, meditative.

Devotion belongs to the inner life, and lives in the closet, but also appears in the public services of the sanctuary. It is a part of the very spirit of true worship, and is of the nature of the spirit of prayer.

Devotion belongs to the devout man, whose thoughts and feelings are devoted to God. Such a man has a mind given up wholly to religion, and possesses a strong affection for God and an ardent love for his house. Cornelius was "a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed always." "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial." "One Ananias, a devout man, according to the law," was sent unto Saul when he was blind, to tell him what the Lord would have him do. God can wonderfully use such men, for devout men are his chosen agents in carrying forward his plans.

Prayer promotes the spirit of devotion, while devotion is favorable to the best praying. Devotion furthers prayer and helps to drive prayer home to the object which it seeks. Prayer thrives in the atmosphere of true devotion. It is easy to pray when in the spirit of devotion. The attitude of mind and the state of heart implied in devotion make prayer effectual in reaching the throne of grace. God dwells where the spirit of devotion resides. All the graces of the Spirit are nourished and grow well in the environment created by devotion. Indeed, these graces grow nowhere else but here. The absence of a devotional spirit means death to the graces born in a renewed heart. True worship finds congeniality in the atmosphere made by a spirit of devotion. While prayer is helpful to devotion, at the same time devotion reacts on prayer, and helps us to pray.

Devotion engages the heart in prayer. It is not an easy task for the lips to try to pray while the heart is absent from it. The charge which God at one time made against his ancient Israel was, that they honored him with their lips while their hearts were far from him.

The very essence of prayer is the spirit of devotion. Without devotion, prayer is an empty form, a vain round of words. Sad to say, much of this kind of prayer prevails, today, in the church. This is a busy age, bustling and active, and this bustling spirit has invaded the church of God. Its religious performances are many. The church works at religion with the order, precision and force of real machinery. But too often it works with the heartlessness of the machine. There is much of the treadmill movement in our ceaseless round and routine of religious doings. We pray without praying. We sing, without singing with the Spirit and the understanding. We have music without the praise of God being in it, or near it. We go to church by habit, and come home

all too gladly when the benediction is pronounced. We read our accustomed chapter in the Bible, and feel quite relieved when the task is done. We say our prayers by rote, as a schoolboy recites his lesson, and are not sorry when the Amen is uttered.

Religion has to do with everything but our hearts. It engages our hands and feet, it takes hold of our voices, it lays its hands on our money, it affects even the postures of our bodies, but it does not take hold of our affections, our desires, our zeal, and make us serious, desperately in earnest, and cause us to be quiet and worshipful in the presence of God. Social affinities attract us to the house of God, not the spirit of the occasion. Church membership keeps us after a fashion decent in outward conduct and with some shadow of loyalty to our baptismal vows, but the heart is not in the thing. It remains cold, formal, and unimpressed amid all this outward performance, while we give ourselves over to self-congratulation that we are doing wonderfully well religiously.

Why all these sad defects in our piety? Why this modern perversion of the true nature of the religion of Jesus Christ? Why is the modern type of religion so much like a jewel-case, with the precious jewels gone? Why so much of this handling religion with the hands, often not too clean or unsoiled, and so little of it felt in the heart and witnessed in the life?

The great lack of modern religion is the spirit of devotion. We hear sermons in the same spirit with which we listen to a lecture or hear a speech. We visit the house of God just as if it were a common place, on a level with the theater, the lecture-room or the forum. We look upon the minister of God not as the divinely-called man of God, but merely as a sort of public speaker, on a plane with the politician, the lawyer, or the average speech maker, or the lecturer. Oh, how the spirit of true and genuine devotion would radically change all this for the better! We handle sacred things just as if they were the things of the world. Even the sacrament of the Lord's Supper becomes a mere religious performance, no preparation for it before-hand, and no meditation and prayer afterward. Even the sacrament of Baptism has lost much of its solemnity, and degenerated into a mere form, with nothing specially in it.

We need the spirit of devotion, not only to salt our secularities, but to make praying real prayers. We need to put the spirit of devotion into Monday's business as well as in Sunday's worship. We need the spirit of devotion,

to recollect always the presence of God, to be always doing the will of God, to direct all things always to the glory of God.

The spirit of devotion puts God in all things. It puts God not merely in our praying and church going, but in all the concerns of life. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The spirit of devotion makes the common things of earth sacred, and the little things great. With this spirit of devotion, we go to business on Monday directed, by the very same influence, and inspired by the same influences by which we went to church on Sunday. The spirit of devotion makes a Sabbath out of Saturday, and transforms the shop and the office into a temple of God.

The spirit of devotion removes religion from being a thin veneer, and puts it into the very life and being of our souls. With it religion ceases to be doing a mere work, and becomes a heart, sending its rich blood through every artery and beating with the pulsations of vigorous and radiant life.

The spirit of devotion is not merely the aroma of religion, but the stalk and stem on which religion grows. It is the salt which penetrates and makes savory all religious acts. It is the sugar which sweetens duty, self-denial and sacrifice. It is the bright coloring which relieves the dullness of religious performances. It dispels frivolity and drives away all skin-deep forms of worship, and makes worship a serious and deep-seated service, impregnating body, soul and spirit with its heavenly infusion. Let us ask in all seriousness, has this highest angel of Heaven, this heavenly spirit of devotion, this brightest and best angel of earth, left us? When the angel of devotion has gone, the angel of prayer has lost its wings, and it becomes a deformed and loveless thing.

The ardor of devotion is in prayer. In Rev. 4:8, we read: "And they rest not day nor night, saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.'" The inspiration and center of their rapturous devotion is the holiness of God. That holiness of God claims their attention, inflames their devotion. There is nothing cold, nothing dull, nothing wearisome about them or their heavenly worship. "They rest not day nor night." What zeal! What unfainting ardor and ceaseless rapture! The ministry of prayer, if it be anything worthy of the name, is a ministry of ardor, a ministry of unwearied and intense longing after God and after his holiness.

The spirit of devotion pervades the saints in Heaven and characterizes the worship of heaven's angelic intelligences. No devotionless creatures are

in that heavenly world. God is there, and his very presence begets the spirit of reverence, of awe, and of filial fear. If we would be partakers with them after death, we must first learn the spirit of devotion on earth, before we get there.

These living creatures in their restless, tireless, attitude after God, and their rapt devotion to his holiness, are the perfect symbols and illustrations of true prayer and its ardor. Prayer must be aflame. Its ardor must consume. Prayer without fervor is as a sun without light or heat, or as a flower without beauty or fragrance. A soul devoted to God is a fervent soul, and prayer is the creature of that flame. He only can truly pray who is all aglow for holiness, for God, and for Heaven.

Activity is not strength. Work is not zeal. Moving about is not devotion. Activity often is the unrecognized symptom of spiritual weakness. It may be hurtful to piety when made the substitute for real devotion in worship. The colt is much more active than its mother, but she is the wheel-horse of the team, pulling the load without noise or bluster or show. The child is more active than the father, who may be bearing the rule and burdens of an empire on his heart and shoulders. Enthusiasm [religious over-reaction] is more active than faith, though it cannot remove mountains nor call into action any of the omnipotent forces which faith can command.

A feeble, lively, showy religious activity may spring from many causes. There is much running around, much stirring about, much going here and there, in present-day church life, but sad to say, the spirit of genuine, heartfelt devotion is strangely lacking. If there be real spiritual life, a deep-toned activity will spring from it. But it is an activity springing from strength and not from weakness. It is an activity which has deep roots, many and strong.

In the nature of things, religion must show much of its growth above ground. Much will be seen and be evident to the eye. The flower and fruit of a holy life, abounding in good works, must be seen. It cannot be otherwise. But the surface growth must be based on a vigorous growth of unseen life and hidden roots. Deep down in the renewed nature, must the roots of religion go, which is seen on the outside. The external must have a deep internal groundwork. There must be much of the invisible and the underground growth, or else the life will be feeble and short-lived and the external growth sickly and fruitless.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, these words are written:

They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.—Isaiah 40:31

This is the genesis of the whole matter of activity and strength of the most energetic, exhaustless and untiring nature. All this is the result of waiting on God.

There may be much of activity induced by drill, created by enthusiasm, the product of the weakness of the flesh, the inspiration of volatile, short-lived forces. Activity is often at the expense of more solid, useful elements, and generally to the total neglect of prayer. To be too busy with God's work to commune with God, to be busy with doing church work without taking time to talk to God about his work, is the highway to backsliding, and many people have walked therein to the hurt of their immortal souls.

Notwithstanding great activity, great enthusiasm, and much hurrah for the work, the work and the activity will be but blindness without the cultivation and the maturity of the graces of prayer.



CHAPTER 4

Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving

Dr. A. J. Gordon describes the impression made upon his mind by intercourse with Joseph Rabinowitz, whom Dr. Delitzsch considered the most remarkable Jewish convert since Saul of Tarsus: "We shall not soon forget the radiance that would come into his face as he expounded the Messianic psalms at our morning or evening worship, and how, as here and there he caught a glimpse of the suffering or glorified Christ, he would suddenly lift his hands and his eyes to Heaven in a burst of adoration, exclaiming with Thomas, after he had seen the nail-prints, 'My Lord, and my God.'"

—D. M. McIntyre



Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving all go in company. A close relationship exists between them. Praise and thanksgiving are so near alike that it is not easy to distinguish between them or define them separately. The Scriptures join these three things together. Many are the causes for thanksgiving and praise. The Psalms are filled with many songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving, all pointing back to the results of prayer. Thanksgiving includes gratitude. In fact thanksgiving is but the expression of an inward conscious gratitude to God for mercies received. Gratitude is an inward emotion of the soul, involuntarily arising therein, while thanksgiving is the voluntary expression of gratitude.

Thanksgiving is oral, positive, active. It is the giving out of something to God. Thanksgiving comes out into the open. Gratitude is secret, silent, negative, passive, not showing its being till expressed in praise and thanksgiving. Gratitude is felt in the heart. Thanksgiving is the expression of that inward feeling.

Thanksgiving is just what the word itself signifies—the giving of thanks to God. It is giving something to God in words which we feel at heart for blessings received. Gratitude arises from a contemplation of the goodness of God. It is bred by serious meditation on what God has done for us. Both gratitude and thanksgiving point to, and have to do with God and his mercies. The heart is consciously grateful to God. The soul gives expression to that heartfelt gratitude to God in words or acts.

Gratitude is born of meditation on God's grace and mercy. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Herein we see the value of serious meditation. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Praise is begotten by gratitude and a conscious obligation to God for mercies given. As we think of mercies past, the heart is inwardly moved to gratitude.

*I love to think on mercies past,
And future good implore;
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On him whom I adore.*

Love is the child of gratitude. Love grows as gratitude is felt, and then breaks out into praise and thanksgiving to God: "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplication." Answered prayers cause gratitude, and gratitude brings forth a love that declares it will not cease praying: "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Gratitude and love move to larger and increased praying.

Paul appeals to the Romans to dedicate themselves wholly to God, a living sacrifice, and the constraining motive is the mercies of God:

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Consideration of God's mercies not only begets gratitude, but induces a large consecration to God of all we have and are. So that prayer, thanksgiving and consecration are all linked together inseparably.

Gratitude and thanksgiving always looks back at the past, though they may also take in the present. But prayer always looks to the future. Thanksgiving deals with things already received. Prayer deals with things desired, asked for, and expected. Prayer turns to gratitude and praise when the things asked for have been granted by God.

As prayer brings things to us which beget gratitude and thanksgiving, so praise and gratitude promote prayer, and induce more praying and better praying.

Gratitude and thanksgiving forever stand opposed to all murmurings at God's dealings with us, and all complainings at our lot. Gratitude and murmuring never abide in the same heart at the same time. An unappreciative spirit has no standing beside gratitude and praise. And true prayer corrects complaining and promotes gratitude and thanksgiving. Dissatisfaction at one's lot, and a disposition to be discontented with things which come to us in the providence of God, are foes to gratitude and enemies to thanksgiving.

The murmurers are ungrateful people. Appreciative men and women have neither the time nor disposition to stop and complain. The bane of the wilderness-journey of the Israelites on their way to Canaan was their proneness to murmur and complain against God and Moses. For this, God was several times greatly grieved, and it took the strong praying of Moses to avert God's wrath because of these murmurings. The absence of gratitude left no room nor disposition for praise and thanksgiving, just as it is so always. But when these same Israelites were brought through the Red Sea dry shod, while their enemies were destroyed, there was a song of praise led by Miriam, the sister of Moses. One of the leading sins of these Israelites was forgetfulness of God and his mercies, and ingratitude of soul. This brought forth murmurings and lack of praise, as it always does.

When Paul wrote to the Colossians to let the word of Christ dwell in their hearts richly and to let the peace of God rule therein, he said to them, "and be ye thankful," and adds, "admonishing yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord."

Further on, in writing to these same Christians, he joins prayer and thanksgiving together: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

The main design of all singing is for God's ear and to attract his attention and to please him. It is "to the Lord," for his glory, and to his honor. Certainly it is not for the glorification of the paid choir, to exalt the wonderful musical powers of the singers, nor is it to draw the people to the church, but it is for the glory of God and the good of the souls of the congregation. Alas! How far has the singing of choirs of churches of modern times departed from this idea! It is no surprise that there is no life, no power, no unction, no spirit, in much of the church singing heard in this day. It is sacrilege for any but sanctified hearts and holy lips to direct the singing part of the service of God's house of prayer. Much of the singing in churches would do credit to the opera house, and might satisfy as mere entertainments, pleasing the ear—but as a part of real worship, having in it the spirit of praise and prayer, it is a fraud, an imposition on spiritually minded people, and entirely unacceptable to God. The cry should go out afresh, "Let all the people praise the Lord," for "it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

The music of praise, for there is real music of soul in praise, is too hopeful and happy to be denied. All these are in the "giving of thanks." In Philippians, prayer is called "requests." "Let your *requests* be made known unto God," which describes prayer as an asking for a gift, giving prominence to the thing asked for, making it emphatic, something to be given by God and received by us, and not something to be done by us. And all this is closely connected with gratitude to God: "with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

God does much for us in answer to prayer, but we need from him many gifts, and for them we are to make special prayer. According to our special needs, so must our praying be. We are to be special and particular and bring to the knowledge of God by prayer, supplication and thanksgiving, our particular requests, the things we need, the things we greatly desire. And with it all, accompanying all these requests, there must be thanksgiving.

It is indeed a pleasing thought that what we are called upon to do on earth—to praise and give thanks—the angels in Heaven and the redeemed disembodied spirits of the saints are doing also. It is still further pleasing to contemplate the glorious hope that what God wants us to do on earth, we will be engaged in doing throughout an unending eternity. Praise and thanksgiving will

The Essentials of Prayer: Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving

be our blessed employment while we remain in Heaven. Nor will we ever grow weary of this pleasing task.

Joseph Addison sets before us, in verse, this pleasing prospect:

*Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue;
And after death, in distant worlds,
The pleasing theme renew.*

*Through all eternity to thee
A grateful song I'll raise;
But oh! eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise.*



CHAPTER 5

Prayer and Trouble

"He will." It may not be today,
That God himself shall wipe our tears away,
Nor, hope deferred, may it be yet tomorrow
He'll take away our cup of earthly sorrow;
But, precious promise, he has said he will,
If we but trust him fully—and be still.

We, too, as He [did], may fall, and die unknown;
And e'en the place we fell be all unshown,
But eyes omniscient will mark the spot
Till empires perish and the world's forgot.
Then they who bore the yoke and drank the cup
In fadeless glory shall the Lord raise up.
God's word is ever good; his will is best:—
The yoke, the heart all broken—and then rest.

—Claudius L. Chilton



Trouble and prayer are closely related to each other. Prayer is of great value to trouble. Trouble often drives men to God in prayer, while prayer is but the voice of men in trouble. There is great value in prayer in the time of

trouble. Prayer often delivers out of trouble, and still oftener gives strength to bear trouble, ministers comfort in trouble, and begets patience in the midst of trouble. Wise is he in the day of trouble who knows his true source of strength and who fails not to pray.

Trouble belongs to the present state of man on earth. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." Trouble is common to man. There is no exception in any age or clime or station. Rich and poor alike, the learned and the ignorant, one and all are partakers of this sad and painful inheritance of the fall of man. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." The "day of trouble" dawns on everyone at some time in his life. "The evil days come and the years draw nigh," when the heart feels its heavy pressure.

That is an entirely false view of life and shows supreme ignorance that expects nothing but sunshine and looks only for ease, pleasure and flowers. It is this class who are so sadly disappointed and surprised when trouble breaks into their lives. These are the ones who know not God, who know nothing of his disciplinary dealings with his people, and who are prayerless.

What an infinite variety there is in the troubles of life! How diversified, the experiences of men in the school of trouble! No two people have the same troubles under like environments. God deals with no two of his children in the same way. And as God varies his treatment of his children, so trouble is varied. God does not repeat himself. He does not run in a rut. He has not one pattern for every child. Each trouble is proportioned to each child. Each one is dealt with according to his own peculiar case.

Trouble is God's servant, doing his will unless he is defeated in the execution of that will. Trouble is under the control of Almighty God, and is one of his most efficient agents in fulfilling his purposes and in perfecting his saints. God's hand is in every trouble which breaks into the lives of men. Not that he directly and arbitrarily orders every unpleasant experience of life. Not that he is personally responsible for every painful and afflicting thing which comes into the lives of his people. But no trouble is ever turned loose in this world and comes into the life of saint or sinner, but comes with divine permission, and is allowed to exist and do its painful work with God's hand in it or on it, carrying out his gracious designs of redemption.

All things are under divine control. Trouble is neither above God nor beyond his control. It is not something in life independent of God. No matter

from what source it springs nor whence it arises, God is sufficiently wise and able to lay his hand upon it without assuming responsibility for its origin, and work it into his plans and purposes concerning the highest welfare of his saints. This is the explanation of that gracious statement in Romans, so often quoted, but the depth of whose meaning has rarely been sounded, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Even the evils brought about by the forces of nature are his servants, carrying out his will and fulfilling his designs. God even claims the locusts, the cankerworm [crop-devouring larva], the caterpillar are his servants: "My great army," used by him to correct his people and discipline them.

Trouble belongs to the disciplinary part of the moral government of God. This is a life of probation, where the human race is on probation. It is a season of trial. Trouble is not penal in its nature. It belongs to what the Scriptures call "chastening." "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Speaking accurately, punishment does not belong to this life. Punishment for sin will take place in the next world. God's dealings with people in this world are of the nature of discipline. They are corrective processes in his plans concerning man. It is because of this that prayer comes in when trouble arises. Prayer belongs to the discipline of life.

As trouble is not sinful in itself, neither is it the evidence of sin. Good and bad alike experience trouble. As the rain falls alike on the just and unjust, so drouth [drought] likewise comes to the righteous and the wicked. Trouble is no evidence whatever of the divine displeasure. Scripture instances without number disprove any such idea. Job is a case in point, where God bore explicit testimony to his deep piety, and yet God permitted Satan to afflict him beyond any other man for wise and beneficent purposes. Trouble has no power in itself to interfere with the relations of a saint to God. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Three words practically the same in the processes of divine discipline are found, temptation, trial, and trouble, and yet there is a difference between them. Temptation is really a solicitation to evil arising from the Devil or born in the carnal nature of man. Trial is testing. It is that which proves us, tests us, and makes us stronger and better when we submit to the trial and work

together with God in it. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

Peter speaks along the same line:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The third word is trouble itself, which covers all the painful, sorrowing, and grievous events of life. And yet temptations and trials might really become troubles. So that all evil days in life might well be classed under the head of the "time of trouble." And such days of trouble are the lot of all men. Enough to know that trouble, no matter from what source it comes; becomes, in God's hand, his own agent to accomplish his gracious work concerning those who submit patiently to him, who recognize him in prayer, and who work together with God.

Let us settle down at once to the idea that trouble arises not by chance, and neither occurs by what men call accident.

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.

Trouble naturally belongs to God's moral government, and is one of his invaluable agents in governing the world.

When we realize this, we can the better understand much that is recorded in the Scriptures, and can have a clearer conception of God's dealings with his ancient Israel. In God's dealings with them, we find what is called a history of divine providence, and providence always embraces trouble. No one can understand the story of Joseph and his old father Jacob unless he takes into account, trouble and its varied offices. God takes account of trouble when he urges his prophet Isaiah on this wise:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

There is a distinct note of comfort in the Gospel for the praying saints of the Lord, and he is a wise scribe in divine things who knows how to minister

this comfort to the broken-hearted and sad ones of earth. Jesus himself said to his sad disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless."

All the foregoing has been said that we may rightly appreciate the relationship of prayer to trouble. In the time of trouble, where does prayer come in? The Psalmist tells us: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Prayer is the most appropriate thing for a soul to do in the "time of trouble." Prayer recognizes God in the day of trouble. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Prayer sees God's hand in trouble, and prays about it. Nothing more truly shows us our helplessness than when trouble comes. It brings the strong man low, it discloses our weakness, it brings a sense of helplessness. Blessed is he who knows how to turn to God in "the time of trouble." If trouble is of the Lord, then the most natural thing to do is to carry the trouble to the Lord, and seek grace and patience and submission. It is the time to inquire in the trouble, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" How natural and reasonable for the soul, oppressed, broken, and bruised, to bow low at the footstool of mercy and seek the face of God! Where could a soul in trouble more likely find solace than in the closet?

Alas! trouble does not always drive men to God in prayer. Sad is the case of him who, when trouble bends his spirit down and grieves his heart, yet knows not whence the trouble comes nor knows how to pray about it. Blessed is the man who is driven by trouble to his knees in prayer!

*Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all—
"This is happiness to me."*

*Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Bring me to my Savior's feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.*

Prayer in the time of trouble brings comfort, help, hope, and blessings, which, while not removing the trouble, enable the saint the better to bear it and to submit to the will of God. Prayer opens the eyes to see God's hand in trouble. Prayer does not interpret God's providences, but it does justify them and recognize God in them. Prayer enables us to see wise ends in trouble. Prayer in trouble drives us away from unbelief, saves us from doubt, and delivers us from all vain

and foolish questionings because of our painful experiences. Let us not lose sight of the tribute paid to Job when all his troubles came to the culminating point: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Alas! for vain, ignorant men, without faith in God and knowing nothing of God's disciplinary processes in dealing with men, who charge God foolishly when troubles come, and who are tempted to "curse God." How silly and vain are the complainings, the murmurings and the rebellion of men in the time of trouble! What need to read again the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness! And how useless is all our fretting, our worrying over trouble, as if such unhappy doings on our part could change things! "And which of you with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?" How much wiser, how much better, how much easier to bear life's troubles when we take everything to God in prayer!

Trouble has wise ends for the praying ones, and these find it so. Happy is he who, like the Psalmist, finds that his troubles have been blessings in disguise.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.
I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness
hast afflicted me.

*O who could bear life's stormy doom,
Did not thy wing of love
Come brightly wafting through the gloom
Our peace branch from above.*

*Then sorrow, touched by thee, grows bright,
With more than rapture's ray;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day.*

Of course, it may be conceded that some troubles are really imaginary. They have no existence other than in the mind. Some are anticipated troubles, which never arrive at our door. Others are past troubles, and there is much folly in worrying over them. *Present* troubles are the ones requiring attention and demanding prayer. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Some troubles are self-originated. We are their authors. Some of these originate involuntarily with us, some arise from our ignorance, some come from our

carelessness. All this can be readily admitted without breaking the force of the statement that they are the subjects of prayer, and should drive us to prayer. What father casts off his child who cries to him when the little one, from its own carelessness, has stumbled and fallen and hurt itself? Does not the cry of the child attract the ears of the father even though the child be to blame for the accident? "Whatever things ye desire" takes in every event of life, even though some events we are responsible for.

Some troubles are human in their origin. They arise from second causes. They originate with others, and we are the sufferers. This is a world where often the innocent suffer the consequences of the acts of others. This is a part of life's incidents. Who has not at some time suffered at the hands of others? But even these are allowed to come in the order of God's providence, are permitted to break into our lives for beneficent ends, and may be prayed over. Why should we not carry our hurts, our wrongs and our privations, caused by the acts of others, to God in prayer? Are such things outside of the realm of prayer? Are they exceptions to the rule of prayer? Not at all. And God can and will lay his hand upon all such events in answer to prayer, and cause them to work for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Nearly all of Paul's troubles arose from wicked and unreasonable men. Read the story as he gives it in 2 Cor. 11:23-33.

So also some troubles are directly of Satanic origin. Quite all of Job's troubles were the offspring of the Devil's scheme to break down Job's integrity, to make him charge God foolishly and to curse God. But are these not to be recognized in prayer? Are they to be excluded from God's disciplinary processes? Job did not do so. Hear him in those familiar words. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

O what a comfort to see God in all of life's events! What a relief to a broken, sorrowing heart to see God's hand in sorrow! What a source of relief is prayer in unburdening the heart in grief!

*O thou who driest the mourner's tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceived and wounded here,
We could not fly to thee?*

*The friends who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes, are flown,
And he who has but tears to give,
Must weep those tears alone.*

*But thou wilt heal the broken heart,
Which, like the plants that throw
Their fragrance from the wounded part,
Breathes sweetness out of woe.*

But when we survey all the sources from which trouble comes, it all resolves itself into two invaluable truths: first, that our troubles, at last, are of the Lord. They come with his consent. He is in all of them, and is interested in us when they press and bruise us. And secondly, that our troubles, no matter what the cause, whether of ourselves, or men or devils, or even God himself, we are warranted in taking them to God in prayer, in praying over them, and in seeking to get the greatest spiritual benefits out of them.

Prayer in the time of trouble tends to bring the spirit into perfect subjection to the will of God, to cause the will to be conformed to God's will, saves from all murmurings over our lot, and delivers from everything like a rebellious heart or a spirit critical of the Lord. Prayer sanctifies trouble to our highest good. Prayer so prepares the heart that it softens under the disciplining hand of God. Prayer places us where God can bring to us the greatest good, spiritual and eternal. Prayer allows God to freely work with us and in us in the day of trouble. Prayer removes everything in the way of trouble, bringing to us the sweetest, the highest and greatest good. Prayer permits God's servant, trouble, to accomplish its mission in us, with us, and for us.

The end [objective] of trouble is always good, in the mind of God. If trouble fails in its mission, it is either because of prayerlessness, or unbelief, or both. Being in harmony with God in the dispensations of his providence, always makes trouble a blessing. The good or evil of trouble is always determined by the spirit in which it is received. Trouble proves a blessing or a curse, just according as it is received and treated by us. It either softens or hardens us. It either draws us to prayer and to God, or it drives us from God and from the closet. Trouble hardened Pharaoh till finally it had no effect on him, only to make him more desperate and to drive him farther from God. The same sun

softens the wax and hardens the clay. The same sun melts the ice and dries out the moisture from the earth.

As is the infinite variety of trouble, so also is there infinite variety in the relations of prayer to other things. How many are the things which are the subject of prayer! It has to do with everything which concerns us, with everybody with whom we have to do, and has to do with all times. But especially does prayer have to do with trouble. "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." O the blessedness, the help, the comfort of prayer in the day of trouble! And how marvelous the promises of God to us in the time of trouble!

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

*If pain afflict, or wrongs oppress,
If cares distract, or fears dismay;
If guilt deject, if sin distress,
In every case, still watch and pray.*

How rich in its sweetness, how far-reaching in the realm of trouble, and how cheering to faith, are the words of promise which God delivers to his believing, praying ones, by the mouth of Isaiah:

But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee . . . For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior."



CHAPTER 6

Prayer and Trouble (Continued)

My first message for heavenly relief went singing over millions of miles of space in 1869, and brought relief to my troubled heart. But, thanks be to him, I have received many delightful and helpful answers during the last fifty years. I would think the commerce of the skies had gone into bankruptcy if I did not hear frequently, since I have learned how to ask and how to receive.

—H. W. Hodge¹



In the New Testament, there are three words used which embrace trouble. These are tribulation, suffering and affliction, words differing somewhat, and yet each of them practically meaning trouble of some kind. Our Lord put his disciples on notice that they might expect tribulation in this life, teaching them that tribulation belonged to this world, and they could not hope to escape it; that they would not be carried through this life on flowery beds of ease. How hard to learn this plain and patent lesson! "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." There is the encouragement. As he had overcome the world and its tribulations, so might they do the same.

¹ Homer W. Hodge, whom Bounds discipled for 8 years, edited and published Bounds' manuscripts posthumously. (See Preface.)

Paul taught the same lesson throughout his ministry, when, in confirming the souls of the brethren, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, he told them that "we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." He himself knew this by his own experience, for his pathway was anything but smooth and flowery.

He it is who uses the word "suffering" to describe the troubles of life, in that comforting passage in which he contrasts life's troubles with the final glory of Heaven, which shall be the reward of all who patiently endure the ills of divine providence:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

And he it is who speaks of the afflictions which come to the people of God in this world, and regards them as light as compared with the weight of glory awaiting all who are submissive, patient and faithful in all their troubles:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But these present afflictions can work for us only as we cooperate with God in prayer. As God works through prayer, it is only through this means he can accomplish his highest ends for us. His providence works with greatest effect with his praying ones. These know the uses of trouble and its gracious designs. The greatest value in trouble comes to those who bow lowest before the throne.

Paul, in urging patience in tribulation, connects it directly with prayer, as if prayer alone would place us where we could be patient when tribulation comes. "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant [urgent] in prayer." He here couples up tribulation and prayer, showing their close relationship and the worth of prayer in begetting and culturing patience in tribulation. In fact, there can be no patience exemplified when trouble comes, only [except] as it is secured through instant and continued prayer. In the school of prayer is where patience is learned and practiced.

Prayer brings us into that state of grace where tribulation is not only endured, but where there is under it a spirit of rejoicing. In showing the gracious benefits of justification, in Romans 5:3, Paul says:

The Essentials of Prayer: Prayer and Trouble (Continued)

And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

What a chain of graces are here set forth as flowing from tribulation! What successive steps to a high state of religious experience! And what rich fruits result from even painful tribulation!

To the same effect are the words of Peter in his first epistle, in his strong prayer for those Christians to whom he writes; thus showing that suffering and the highest state of grace are closely connected; and intimating that it is through suffering we are to be brought to those higher regions of Christian experience:

But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you.

It is in the fires of suffering that God purifies his saints and brings them to the highest things. It is in the furnace [that] their faith is tested, their patience is tried, and they are developed in all those rich virtues which make up Christian character. It is while they are passing through deep waters that he shows how close he can come to his praying, believing saints.

It takes faith of a high order and a Christian experience far above the average religion of this day, to count it joy when we are called to pass through tribulation. God's highest aim in dealing with his people is in developing Christian character. He is after [pursuing] begetting in us those rich virtues which belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is seeking to make us like himself. It is not so much work that he wants in us. It is not greatness. It is the presence in us of patience, meekness, submission to the divine will, and prayerfulness which brings everything to him. He seeks to beget his own image in us. And trouble in some form tends to do this very thing, for this is the end and aim of trouble. This is its work. This is the task it is called to perform. It is not a chance incident in life, but has a design in view, just as it has an All-wise Designer back of it, who makes trouble his agent to bring forth the largest results.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews gives us a perfect directory of trouble, comprehensive, clear and worthwhile to be studied. Here is "chastisement,"

another word for trouble, coming from a Father's hand, showing God is in all the sad and afflictive events of life. Here is its nature and its gracious design. It is not punishment in the accurate meaning of that word, but the means God employs to correct and discipline his children in dealing with them on earth. Then we have the fact of the evidence of being his people, namely, the presence of chastisement. The ultimate end is that we "may be partakers of his holiness," which is but another way of saying that all this disciplinary process is to the end that God may make us like himself. What an encouragement, too, that, chastisement is no evidence of anger or displeasure on God's part, but is the strong proof of his love. Let us read the entire directory on this important subject:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.

Just as prayer is wide in its range, taking in everything, so trouble is infinitely varied in its uses and designs. It takes trouble sometimes to arrest attention, to stop men in the busy rush of life, and to awaken them to a sense of their helplessness and their need and sinfulness. Not till King Manasseh was bound with thorns and carried away into a foreign land and got into deep trouble, was he awakened and brought back to God. It was then he humbled himself and began to call upon God.

The Prodigal Son was independent and self-sufficient when in prosperity, but when money and friends departed, and he began to be in want, then it was he "came to himself," and decided to return to his father's house, with prayer and confession on his lips. Many a man who has forgotten God has been

arrested, caused to consider his ways, and brought to remember God and pray by trouble. Blessed is trouble when it accomplishes this in men!

It is for this among other reasons that Job says:

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth. Therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands maketh whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

One thing more might be named. Trouble makes earth undesirable and causes Heaven to loom up large in the horizon of hope. There is a world where trouble never comes. But the path of tribulation leads to that world. Those who are there went there through tribulation. What a world set before our longing eyes, which appeals to our hopes, as sorrows like a cyclone sweep over us! Hear John, as he talks about it and those who are there:

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" . . . And he said to me, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

*There I shall bathe my weary soul,
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll,
Across my peaceful breast.*

Oh, children of God, ye who have suffered, who have been sorely tried, whose sad experiences have often brought broken spirits and bleeding hearts, cheer up! God is in all your troubles, and he will see that all shall "work together for good," if you will but be patient, submissive and prayerful.



CHAPTER 7

Prayer and God's Work

If Jacob's desire had been given [to] him in time for him to get a good night's sleep, he might never have become the prince of prayers we know today. If Hannah's prayer for a son had been answered at the time she set for herself, the nation might never have known the mighty man of God it found in Samuel. Hannah wanted only a son, but God wanted more. He wanted a prophet, and a Savior, and a ruler for his people. Someone said that "God had to get a woman before he could get a man." This woman he got in Hannah precisely by those weeks and months and years there came a woman with a vision like God's, with tempered soul and gentle spirit and a seasoned will, prepared to be the kind of a mother for the kind of a man God knew the nation needed.

—W. E. Binderwolf

God has a great work on hand in this world. This work is involved in the plan of salvation. It embraces redemption and providence. God is governing this world, with its intelligent beings, for his own glory and for their good. What, then, is God's work in this world? Rather what is the end he seeks in his great work? It is nothing short of holiness of heart and life in the children of fallen Adam. Man is a fallen creature, born with an evil nature, with an evil bent, unholy propensities, sinful desires, wicked inclinations. Man is unholy by nature, born so. "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

God's entire plan is to take hold of fallen man and to seek to change him and make him holy. God's work is to make holy men out of unholy men. This

is the very end of Christ coming into the world, "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." God is holy in nature and in all his ways, and he wants to make man like himself. "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'"

This is being Christlike. This is following Jesus Christ. This is the aim of all Christian effort. This is the earnest, heartfelt desire of every truly regenerated soul. This is what is to be constantly and earnestly prayed for. It is that we may be made holy. Not that we must make *ourselves* holy, but we must be cleansed from all sin by the precious atoning blood of Christ, and be made holy by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Not that we are to *do* holy, but rather to *be* holy. Being must precede doing. First be, then do. First, obtain a holy heart, then live a holy life. And for this high and gracious end, God has made the most ample provisions in the atoning work of our Lord and through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The work of God in the world is the implantation, the growth, and the perfection of holiness in his people. Keep this ever in mind. But we might ask just now, "Is this work advancing in the church? Are men and women being made holy? Is the present-day church engaged in the business of making holy men and women?" This is not a vain and speculative question. It is practical, pertinent, and all important.

The present-day church has vast machinery. Her activities are great, and her material prosperity is unparalleled. The name of religion is widely-spread and well-known. Much money comes into the Lord's treasury and is paid out. But here is the question: does the work of holiness keep pace with all this? Is the burden of the prayers of church people, to be made holy? Are our preachers really holy men? Or to go back a little further, are they hungering and thirsting after righteousness, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby? Are they really seeking to be holy men? Of course men of intelligence are greatly needed in the pulpit, but prior to that, and primary to it, is the fact that we need holy men to stand before dying men and proclaim the salvation of God to them.

Ministers, like laymen—and no more so than laymen [who are likewise responsible]—must be holy men in life, in conversation, and in temper. They must be examples to the flock of God in all things. By their lives they are to

preach, as well as to speak. Men in the pulpit are needed who are spotless in life, circumspect in behavior, "without rebuke and blameless in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they are to shine in the world." Are our preachers of this type of men? We are simply asking the question. Let the reader make up his own judgment. Is the work of holiness making progress among our preachers?

Again let us ask: are our leading laymen examples of holiness? Are they seeking holiness of heart and life? Are they praying men, ever praying that God would fashion them according to his pattern of holiness? Are their business ways without stain of sin, and their gains free from the taint of wrongdoing? Have they the foundation of solid honesty, and does uprightness bring them into elevation and influence? Does business integrity and probity [uprightness] run parallel with religious activity, and with churchly observance?

Then, while we are pursuing our investigation, seeking light as to whether the work of God among his people is making progress, let us ask further as to our women. Are the leading women of our churches dead to the fashions of this world, separated from the world, not conformed to the world's maxims and customs? Are they in behavior as becometh holiness, teaching the young women by word and life the lessons of soberness, obedience, and home-keeping? Are our women noted for their praying habits? Are they patterns of prayer?

How searching are all these questions? And will anyone dare say they are impertinent and out of place? If God's work be to make men and women holy, and he has made ample provisions in the law of prayer of doing this very thing, why should it be thought impertinent and useless to propound such personal and pointed questions as these? They have to do directly with the work and with its progress and its perfection. They go to the very seat of the disease. They hit the spot.

We might as well face the situation first as last. There is no use to shut our eyes to real facts. If the church does not do this sort of work—if the church does not advance its members in holiness of heart and life—then all our show of activities and all our display of church work are a delusion and a snare.

But let us ask as to another large and important class of people in our churches. They are the hope of the future church. To them all eyes are turned. Are our young men and women growing in sober-mindedness and

reverence, and in all those graces which have their root in the renewed heart, which mark solid and permanent advance in the divine life? If we are not growing in holiness, then we are doing nothing religious nor abiding.

Material prosperity is not the infallible sign of spiritual prosperity. The former may exist while the latter is significantly absent. Material prosperity may easily blind the eyes of church leaders, so much so that they will make it a substitute for spiritual prosperity. How great the need to watch at that point! Prosperity in money matters does not signify growth in holiness. The seasons of material prosperity are rarely seasons of spiritual advance, either to the individual or to the church. It is so easy to lose sight of God when goods increase. It is so easy to lean on human agencies and cease praying and relying upon God when material prosperity comes to the church.

If it be contended that the work of God is progressing, and that we are growing in holiness, then some perplexing questions arise which will be hard to answer. If the church is making advances on the lines of deep spirituality—if we are a praying people, noted for our prayer habits—if our people are hungering after holiness—then let us ask, why do we now have so few mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit on our chief churches and our principal appointments? Why is it that so few of our revivals spring from the life of the pastor, who is noted for his deep spirituality, or the life of our church? Is the Lord's hand shortened that he cannot save? Is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? Why is it that in order to have so-called revivals, we must have outside pressure, by the reputation and sensation of some renowned evangelist? This is largely true in our larger charges and with our leading men. Why is it that the pastor is not sufficiently spiritual, holy and in communion with God, that he cannot hold his own revival services, and have large outpourings of the Holy Spirit on the church, the community and upon himself? There can be but one solution for all this state of things. We have cultivated other things to the neglect of the work of holiness. We have permitted our minds to be preoccupied with material things in the church. Unfortunately, whether designedly or not, we have substituted the external for the internal. We have put that which is seen to the front and shut out that which is unseen. It is all too true as to the church, that we are much further advanced in material matters than in matters spiritual.

But the cause of this sad state of things may be traced further back. It is largely due to the decay of prayer. For with the decline of the work of holiness, there has come the decline of the business of praying. As praying and holiness go together, so the decline of one, means the decay of the other. Excuse it if we may, justify the present state of things if we will, yet it is all too patent [clear] that the emphasis in the work of the present-day church is not put on prayer. And just as this has occurred, the emphasis has been taken from the great work of God [which was] set on foot in the atonement—holiness of heart and life. The church is not turning out praying men and women, because the church is not intently engaged in the one great work of holiness.

At one time, John Wesley saw that there was a perceptible decline in the work of holiness, and he stopped short to inquire into the cause, and if we are as honest and spiritual as he was, we will now see the same causes operating to stay God's work among us. In a letter to his brother, Charles, at one time, he comes directly to the point, and makes short, incisive work of it. Here is how he begins his letter:

What has hindered the work? I want to consider this. And must we not first say, we are the chief. If we were more holy in heart and life, thoroughly devoted to God, would not all the preachers catch fire, and carry it with them, throughout the land?

Is not the next hindrance the littleness of grace (rather than of gifts) in a considerable part of our preachers? They have not the whole mind that was in Christ. They do not steadily walk as he walked. And, therefore, the hand of the Lord is stayed, though not altogether; though he does work still. But it is not in such a degree as he surely would, were they holy, as he that hath sent them is holy.

Is not the third hindrance the littleness of grace in the generality of our people? Therefore, they pray little, and with little fervency for a general blessing. And, therefore, their prayer has little power with God. It does not, as once, shut and open Heaven.

Add to this, that as there is much of the spirit of the world in their hearts, so there is much conformity to the world in their lives. They ought to be bright and shining lights, but they neither burn nor shine. They are not true to the rules they profess to observe. They are not holy in all manner of conversation. Nay, many of them are salt that has lost its savor, the little savor they

once had. Wherewith then shall the rest of the land be seasoned? What wonder that their neighbors are as unholy as ever?

He strikes the spot. He hits the center. He grades the cause. He freely confesses that he and Charles are the first cause in this decline of holiness. The chief ones occupy positions of responsibility. As they go, so goes the church. They give color to the church. They largely determine its character and its work. What holiness should mark these chief men? What zeal should ever characterize them? What prayerfulness should be seen in them! How influential they ought to be with God! If the head be weak, then the whole body will feel the stroke.

The pastors come next in his catalog. When the chief shepherds and those who are under them, the immediate pastors, stay their advance in holiness, the panic will reach to the end of the line. As are the pastors, so will the people be, as a rule. If the pastors are prayerless, then will the people follow in their footsteps. If the preacher be silent upon the work of holiness, then will there be no hungering and thirsting after holiness in the laymen. If the preacher be careless about obtaining the highest and best God has for him in religious experience, then will the people take after him.

One statement of Wesley needs to be repeated with emphasis. "The littleness of grace, rather than the smallness of gifts"—this is largely the case with the preachers. It may be stated as an axiom: "That the work of God fails, as a general rule, more for the lack of grace than for the want of gifts." It is more than this. It is more than this, for a full supply of grace brings an increase of gifts. It may be repeated that small results, a low experience, a low religious life, and pointless, powerless preaching always flow from a lack of grace. And a lack of grace flows from a lack of praying. Great grace comes from great praying.

*What is our calling's glorious hope
But inward holiness?
For this to Jesus I look up,
I calmly wait for this.*

*I wait till he shall touch me clean,
Shall life and power impart;
Give me the faith that casts out sin,
And purifies the heart.*

In carrying on his great work in the world, God works through human agents. He works through his church collectively and through his people individually. In order that they may be effective agents, they must be "vessels unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." God works most effectively through holy men. His work makes progress in the hands of praying men. Peter tells us that husbands who might not be reached by the Word of God, might be won by the conversation of their wives. It is those who are "blameless and harmless, the sons of God," who can hold forth the word of life "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

The world judges religion not by what the Bible says, but by how Christians live. Christians are the Bible which sinners read. These are the epistles to be read of all men. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The emphasis, then, is to be placed upon holiness of life. But unfortunately in the present-day church, emphasis has been placed elsewhere. In selecting church workers and choosing ecclesiastical officers, the quality of holiness is not considered. The praying fitness seems not to be taken into account, when it was just otherwise in all of God's movements and in all of his plans. He looked for holy men, those noted for their praying habits. Prayer leaders are scarce. Prayer conduct is not counted as the highest qualification for offices in the church.

We cannot wonder that so little is accomplished in the great work in the world which God has in hand. The fact is that it is surprising so much has been done with such feeble, defective agents. "Holiness to the Lord" needs again to be written on the banners of the church. Once more it needs to be sounded out in the ears of modern Christians. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Let it be iterated and reiterated that this is the divine standard of religion. Nothing short of this will satisfy the divine requirement. O the danger of deception at this point! How near one can come to being right and yet be wrong! Some men can come very near to pronouncing the test word, "Shibboleth," but they miss it!¹ "Many will say unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' in that day," says Jesus Christ, but he further states that then will he say unto them, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Men can do many good things and yet not be holy in heart and righteous in conduct. They can do many good things and lack that spiritual quality of heart

¹ Shibboleth: from Judges 12:4-6. Was used to distinguish one tribe from another.

called holiness. How great the need of hearing the words of Paul guarding us against self-deception in the great work of personal salvation: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

*O may I still from sin depart;
A wise and understanding heart,
Jesus, to me to be given;
And let me through thy Spirit know
To glorify my God below,
And find my way to Heaven.*



CHAPTER 8

Prayer and Consecration

Eudamidas, a citizen of Corinth, died in poverty; but having two wealthy friends, Arctæus and Carixenus, left the following testament: "In virtue of my last will, I bequeath to Arctæus, my mother; and to Carixenus, my daughter; to be taken home to their houses and supported for the remainder of their lives." This testament occasioned much mirth and laughter. The two legatees were pleased, and affectionately executed the will. If heathens trusted each other, why should not I cherish a far greater confidence in my beloved Master, Jesus? I hereby, therefore, nominate him my sole heir, consigning to him my soul and my children and sisters, that he may adopt, protect, and provide for them by his mighty power unto salvation. The whole residue of the estate shall be entrusted to his holy counsel. —Gotthold



When we study the many-sidedness of prayer, we are surprised at the number of things with which it is connected. There is no phase of human life which it does not affect, and it has to do with everything affecting human salvation. Prayer and consecration are closely related. Prayer leads up to, and governs consecration. Prayer is precedent to consecration, accompanies it, and is a direct result of it. Much goes under the name of consecration which has no consecration in it. Much consecration of the present day is defective, superficial, and spurious, worth nothing so far as the office and ends of consecration are concerned. Popular consecration is sadly at fault because it has

little or no prayer in it. No consecration is worth a thought which is not the direct fruit of much praying, and which fails to bring one into a life of prayer. Prayer is the one thing prominent in a consecrated life.

Consecration is much more than a life of so-called service. It is a life of personal holiness, first of all. It is that which brings spiritual power into the heart and enlivens the entire inner man. It is a life which ever recognizes God, and a life given up to true prayer.

Full consecration is the highest type of a Christian life. It is the one divine standard of experience, of living and of service. It is the one thing at which the believer should aim. Nothing short of entire consecration must satisfy him.

Never is he to be contented till he is fully, entirely the Lord's, by his own consent. His praying naturally and involuntarily leads up to this one act of his.

Consecration is the voluntary, set dedication of one's self to God, an offering definitely made, and made without any reservation whatever. It is the setting apart of all we are, all we have, and all we expect to have or be, to God first of all. It is not so much the giving of ourselves to the church, or the mere engaging in some one line of church work. Almighty God is in view, and he is the end of all consecration. It is a separation of one's self to God, a devotion of all that he is and has to a sacred use. Some things may be devoted to a special purpose, but it is not consecration in the true sense. Consecration has a sacred nature. It is devoted to holy ends. It is the voluntary putting of one's self in God's hands to be used sacredly, holily, with sanctifying ends in view.

Consecration is not so much the setting one's self apart from sinful things and wicked ends, but rather it is the separation from worldly, secular and even legitimate things, if they come in conflict with God's plans, to holy uses. It is the devoting of all we have to God for his own specific use. It is a separation from things questionable, or even legitimate, when the choice is to be made between the things of this life and the claims of God.

The consecration which meets God's demands and which he accepts is to be full, complete, with no mental reservation, with nothing withheld. It cannot be partial, any more than a whole burnt offering in Old Testament times could have been partial. The whole animal had to be offered in sacrifice. To reserve any part of the animal would have seriously vitiated [debased] the offering. So to make a half-hearted, partial consecration is to make no consecration at all, and is to fail utterly in securing the divine acceptance. It

involves our whole being, all we have, and all that we are. Everything is definitely and voluntarily placed in God's hands for his supreme use.

Consecration is not all there is in holiness. Many make serious mistakes at this point. Consecration makes us relatively holy. We are holy only in the sense that we are now closely related to God, in which we were not related heretofore. Consecration is the human side of holiness. In this sense, it is self-sanctification, and only in this sense. Sanctification or holiness in its truest and highest sense is divine, the act of the Holy Spirit working in the heart, making it clean and putting therein in a higher degree the fruits of the Spirit.

This distinction is clearly set forth and kept in view by Moses in Leviticus, wherein he shows the human and the divine side of sanctification or holiness:

Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God.

And ye shall keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord which sanctify you.

Here we are to sanctify ourselves, and then in the next word we are taught that it is the Lord which sanctifies us. God does not consecrate us to his service. We do not sanctify ourselves in this highest sense. Here is the two-fold meaning of sanctification, and a distinction which needs to be always kept in mind.

Consecration being the intelligent, voluntary act of the believer, this act is the direct result of praying. No prayerless man ever conceives the idea of a full consecration. Prayerlessness and consecration have nothing whatever in common. A life of prayer naturally leads up to full consecration. It leads nowhere else. In fact, a life of prayer is satisfied with nothing else but an entire dedication of one's self to God. Consecration recognizes fully God's ownership to us. It cheerfully assents to the truth set forth by Paul:

Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and spirit, which are God's.

And true praying leads that way. It cannot reach any other destination. It is bound to run into this depot. This is its natural result. This is the sort of work which praying turns out. Praying makes consecrated people. It cannot make any other sort. It drives to this end. It aims at this very purpose.

As prayer leads up to and brings forth full consecration, so prayer entirely impregnates a consecrated life. The prayer life and the consecrated life are intimate companions. They are Siamese twins, inseparable. Prayer enters into every phase of a consecrated life. A prayerless life which claims consecration is a misnomer, false, counterfeit.

Consecration is really the setting apart of one's self to a life of prayer. It means not only to pray, but to pray habitually, and to pray more effectually. It is the consecrated man who accomplishes most by his praying. God must hear the man wholly given up to God. God cannot deny the requests of him who has renounced all claims to himself, and who has wholly dedicated himself to God and his service. This act of the consecrated man puts him "on praying ground and pleading terms" with God. It puts him in reach of God in prayer. It places him where he can get hold of God, and where he can influence God to do things which he would not otherwise do. Consecration brings answers to prayer. God can depend upon consecrated men. God can afford to commit himself in prayer to those who have fully committed themselves to God. He who gives all to God, will get all from God. Having given all to God, he can claim all that God has for him.

As prayer is the condition of full consecration, so prayer is the habit, the rule, of him who has dedicated himself wholly to God. Prayer is becoming in the consecrated life. Prayer is no strange thing in such a life. There is a peculiar affinity between prayer and consecration, for both recognize God, both submit to God, and both have their aim and end in God. Prayer is part and parcel of the consecrated life. Prayer is the constant, the inseparable, the intimate companion of consecration. They walk and talk together.

There is much talk today of consecration, and many are termed consecrated people who know not the alphabet of it. Much modern consecration falls far below the Scripture standard. There is really no real consecration in it. Just as there is much praying without any real prayer in it, so there is much so-called consecration current, today, in the church, which has no real consecration in it. Much passes for consecration in the church which receives the praise and plaudits of superficial, formal professors, but which is wide of the mark. There is much hurrying to and fro, here and there, much fuss and feathers, much going about and doing many things, and those who busy themselves after this fashion are called consecrated men and women. The central trouble with all this false consecration is that there is no prayer in it, nor is it in any sense the direct result of praying. People can do many excellent and commendable things in the church and be utter strangers to a life of consecration, just as they can do many things and be prayerless.

Here is the true test of consecration. It is a life of prayer. Unless prayer be preeminent, unless prayer is to the front, the consecration is faulty, deceptive, falsely named. Does he pray? That is the test-question of every so-called consecrated man. Is he a man of prayer? No consecration is worth a thought if it be devoid of prayer. Yea, more—if it be not preeminently and primarily a life of prayer.

God wants consecrated men because they can pray and *will* pray. He can use consecrated men because he can use praying men. As prayerless men are in his way, hinder him, and prevent the success of his cause, so likewise unconsecrated men are useless to him, and hinder him in carrying out his gracious plans, and in executing his noble purposes in redemption. God wants consecrated men because he wants praying men. Consecration and prayer meet in the same man. Prayer is the tool with which the consecrated man works. Consecrated men are the agents through whom prayer works. Prayer helps the consecrated man in maintaining his attitude of consecration, keeps him alive to God, and aids him in doing the work to which he is called and to which he has given himself. Consecration helps to effectual praying. Consecration enables one to get the most out of his praying.

*Let him to whom we now belong
his sovereign right assert;
And take up every thankful song,
And every loving heart.*

*He justly claims us for his own,
Who bought us with a price;
The Christian lives to Christ alone,
To Christ alone he dies.*

We must insist upon it, that the prime purpose of consecration is not service, in the ordinary sense of that word. Service in the minds of not a few means nothing more than engaging in some of the many forms of modern church activities. There are a multitude of such activities, enough to engage the time and mind of anyone, yea, even more than enough. Some of these may be good, others not so good. The present-day church is filled with machinery, organizations, committees, and societies, so much so that the power it has is altogether insufficient to run the machinery, or to furnish life sufficient to do all this external work. Consecration has a much higher and nobler end than merely to expend itself in these external things.

Consecration aims at the right sort of service—the scriptural kind. It seeks to serve God, but in entirely a different sphere than that which is in the minds of present-day church leaders and workers. The very first sort of service mentioned by Zachariah, father of John the Baptist, in his wonderful prophecy and statement in Luke 1:74, was thus:

That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.

Here we have the idea of “serving God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.”

And the same kind of service is mentioned in Luke’s strong tribute to the father and mother of John the Baptist before the latter’s birth:

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

And Paul, in writing to the Philippians, strikes the same keynote in putting the emphasis on blamelessness of life:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.

We must mention a truth which is strangely overlooked in these days by what are called personal workers: that in the epistles of Paul and others, it is not what are called *church activities* which are brought to the front, but rather the *personal life*. It is good behavior, righteous conduct, holy living, godly conversation, right tempers—things which belong primarily to the personal life in religion. Everywhere this is emphasized, put in the forefront, made much of, and insisted on. Religion first of all puts one to living right. Religion shows itself in the life. Thus is religion to prove its reality, its sincerity and its divinity.

*So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine
To prove the doctrine all divine.*

The Essentials of Prayer: Prayer and Consecration

*Thus shall we best proclaim abroad
The honors of our Savior God;
When the salvation reigns within
And grace subdues the power of sin.*

The first great end of consecration is holiness of heart and of life. It is to glorify God, and this can be done in no more effectual way than by a holy life, flowing from a heart cleansed from all sin. The great burden of heart, pressed on everyone who becomes a Christian, lies right here. This he is to ever keep in mind, and to further this kind of life and this kind of heart, he is to watch, to pray, and to bend all his diligence in using all the means of grace. He who is truly and fully consecrated, lives a holy life. He seeks after holiness of heart. Is not satisfied without it. For this very purpose, he consecrates himself to God. He gives himself entirely over to God in order to be holy in heart and in life.

As holiness of heart and of life is thoroughly impregnated with prayer, so consecration and prayer are closely allied in personal religion. It takes prayer to bring one into such a consecrated life of holiness to the Lord, and it takes prayer to maintain such a life. Without much prayer, such a life of holiness will break down. Holy people are praying people. Holiness of heart and life puts people to praying. Consecration puts people to praying in earnest.

Prayerless people are strangers to anything like holiness of heart and cleanness of heart. Those who are unfamiliar with the closet are not at all interested in consecration and holiness. Holiness thrives in the place of secret prayer. The environments of the closet of prayer are favorable to its being and its culture. In the closet, holiness is found. Consecration brings one into holiness of heart, and prayer stands hard by when it is done.

The spirit of consecration is the spirit of prayer. The law of consecration is the law of prayer. Both laws work in perfect harmony without the slightest jar or discord. Consecration is the practical expression of true prayer. People who are consecrated are known by their praying habits. Consecration thus expresses itself in prayer. He who is not interested in prayer has no interest in consecration. Prayer creates an interest in consecration, then prayer brings one into a state of heart where consecration is a subject of delight, bringing joy of heart, satisfaction of soul, contentment of spirit. The consecrated soul is the happiest soul. There is no friction whatever between him who is fully given over to God and God's will. There is perfect harmony between the will of such

a man and God, and his will. And the two wills being in perfect accord, this brings rest of soul, absence of friction, and the presence of perfect peace.

*Lord, in the strength of grace,
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to thee.*

*Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to thee thy own;
And from this moment, live or die,
To serve my God alone.*



CHAPTER 9

Prayer and a Definite Religious Standard

The angel Gabriel described him as "that holy thing" before he was born. As he was, so are we, in our measure, in this world. —Dr. Alexander White



Much of the feebleness, barrenness, and paucity of religion results from the failure to have a scriptural and reasonable standard in religion by which to shape character and measure results; and this largely results from the omission of prayer or the failure to put prayer in the standard. We cannot possibly mark our advances in religion if there is no point to which we are definitely advancing. Always there must be something definite before the mind's eye at which we are aiming and to which we are driving. We cannot contrast shapeliness with unshapeliness if there be no pattern after which to model. Neither can there be inspiration if there be no high end to stimulate us.

Many Christians are disjointed and aimless because they have no pattern before them, after which conduct and character are to be shaped. They just move on aimlessly, their minds in a cloudy state, no pattern in view, no point in sight, no standard after which they are striving. There is no standard by which to value and gauge their efforts. No magnet is there to fill their eyes, quicken their steps, and to draw them and keep them steady.

All this vague idea of religion grows out of loose notions about prayer. That which helps to make the standard of religion clear and definite is prayer. That which aids in placing that standard high is prayer. The praying ones are those who have something definite in view. In fact, prayer itself is a very definite thing, aims at something specific, and has a mark at which it aims. Prayer aims at the most definite, the highest and the sweetest religious experience. The praying ones want all that God has in store for them. They are not satisfied with anything like a low religious life, superficial, vague and indefinite. The praying ones are not only after a "deeper work of grace," but want the very deepest work of grace possible and promised. They are not after being saved from some sin, but saved from *all* sin, both inward and outward. They are after not only deliverance from sinning, but from sin itself, from its being, its power and its pollution. They are after holiness of heart and life.

Prayer believes in, and seeks for the very highest religious life set before us in the Word of God. Prayer is the condition of that life. Prayer points out the only pathway to such a life. The standard of a religious life is the standard of prayer. Prayer is so vital, so essential, so far-reaching, that it enters into all religion, and sets the standard clear and definite before the eye. The degree of our estimate of prayer fixes our ideas of the standard of a religious life. The standard of Bible religion is the standard of prayer. The more there is of prayer in the life, the more definite and the higher our notions of religion.

The Scriptures alone make the standard of life and experience. When we make our own standard, there is delusion and falsity for our desires—convenience and pleasure form the rule, and that is always a fleshly and a low rule. From it, all the fundamental principles of a Christly religion are left out. Whatever standard of religion which makes in it provision for the flesh, is unscriptural and hurtful.

Nor will it do to leave it to others to fix the standard of religion for us. When we allow others to make our standard of religion, it is generally deficient, because in imitation, defects are transferred to the imitator more readily than virtues, and a second edition of a man is marred by its defects.

The most serious damage in thus determining what religion is, by what others say, is in allowing current opinion, the contagion of example, the grade of religion current among us, to shape our religious opinions and characters.

Adoniram Judson once wrote to a friend, "Let me beg you, not to rest contented with the commonplace religion that is now so prevalent."

Commonplace religion is pleasing to flesh and blood. There is no self-denial in it, no cross bearing, no self-crucifixion. It is good enough for our neighbors. Why should we be singular and straight-laced? Others are living on a low plane, on a compromising level, living as the world lives. Why should we be peculiar, zealous of good works? Why should we fight to win Heaven while so many are sailing there on "flowery beds of ease"? Are the easy-going, careless, sauntering crowd, living prayerless lives, going to Heaven? Is Heaven a fit place for non-praying, loose living, ease loving people? That is the supreme question.

Paul gives the following caution about making for ourselves the jolly, pleasure-seeking religious company all about us, the standard of our measurement:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

No standard of religion is worth a moment's consideration which leaves prayer out of the account. No standard is worth any thought which does not make prayer the main thing in religion. So necessary is prayer, so fundamental in God's plan, so all important to everything like a religious life, that it enters into all Bible religion. Prayer itself is a standard, definite, emphatic, scriptural. A life of prayer is the divine rule. This is the pattern, just as our Lord, being a man of prayer, is the one pattern for us after whom to copy. Prayer fashions the pattern of a religious life. Prayer is the measure. Prayer molds the life.

The vague, indefinite, popular view of religion has no prayer in it. In its program, prayer is entirely left out or put so low down and made so insignificant, that it hardly is worth mentioning. Man's standard of religion has no prayer about it.

It is God's standard at which we are to aim, not man's. It is not the opinions of men, not what they say, but what the Scriptures say. Loose notions of religion grow out of low notions of prayer. Prayerlessness begets loose, cloudy and indefinite views of what religion is. Aimless living and prayerlessness go hand in hand. Prayer sets something definite in the mind. Prayer seeks after

something specific. The more definite our views as to the nature and need of prayer, the more definite will be our views of Christian experience and right living, and the less vague our views of religion. A low standard of religion lives hard by [near] a low standard of praying.

Everything in a religious life depends upon being definite. The definiteness of our religious experiences and of our living will depend upon the definiteness of our views of what religion is and of the things of which it consists.

The Scriptures ever set before us the one standard of full consecration to God. This is the divine rule. This is the human side of this standard. The sacrifice acceptable to God must be a complete one, entire, a whole burnt offering. This is the measure laid down in God's Word. Nothing less than this can be pleasing to God. Nothing half-hearted can please him. "A living sacrifice," holy, and perfect in all its parts, is the measurement of our service to God. A full renunciation of self, a free recognition of God's right to us, and a sincere offering of all to him—this is the divine requirement. Nothing indefinite in that. Nothing is in that which is governed by the opinions of others or affected by how men live about us.

And while a life of prayer is embraced in such a full consecration, at the same time prayer leads up to the point where a complete consecration is made to God. Consecration is but the silent expression of prayer. And the highest religious standard is the measure of prayer and self-dedication to God. The prayer-life and the consecrated life are partners in religion. They are so closely allied they are never separated. The prayer life is the direct fruit of entire consecration to God, Prayer is the natural outflow of a really consecrated life. The measure of consecration is the measure of real prayer. No consecration is pleasing to God which is not perfect in all its parts, just as no burnt offering of a Jew was ever acceptable to God unless it was a "whole burnt offering." And a consecration of this sort, after this divine measurement, has in it as a basic principle, the business of praying. Consecration is made to God. Prayer has to do with God. Consecration is putting one's self entirely at the disposal of God. And God wants and commands all his consecrated ones to be praying ones. This is the one definite standard at which we must aim. Lower than this we cannot afford to seek.

A scriptural standard of religion includes a clear religious experience. Religion is nothing if not experimental. Religion appeals to the inner consciousness.

It is an experience, if anything at all, and an experience in addition to a religious life. There is the internal part of religion as well as the external. Not only are we to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," but "it is God that worketh in us to will and do of his good pleasure." There is a "good work in you," as well as a life outside to be lived. The new birth is a definite Christian experience, proved by infallible marks, appealing to the inner consciousness. The witness of the Spirit is not an indefinite, vague something, but is a definite, clear inward assurance given by the Holy Spirit that we are the children of God. In fact everything belonging to religious experience is clear and definite, bringing conscious joy, peace and love. And this is the divine standard of religion, a standard attained by earnest, constant prayer, and a religious experience kept alive and enlarged by the same means of prayer.

An end to be gained, to which effort is to be directed, is important in every pursuit in order to give unity, energy and steadiness to it. In the Christian life, such an end is all important. Without a high standard before us to be gained, for which we are earnestly seeking, lassitude will unnerve effort, and past experience will taint or exhale into mere sentiment, or be hardened into cold, loveless principle.

We must go on. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." The present ground we occupy must be held by making advances, and all the future must be covered and brightened by it. In religion, we must not only go on. We must know where we are going to. This is all important. It is essential that in going on in religious experience, we have something definite in view, and strike out for that one point. To ever go on and not to know to which place we are going, is altogether too vague and indefinite, and is like a man who starts out on a journey and does not have any destination in view. It is important that we lose not sight of the starting point in a religious life, and that we measure the steps already trod. But it is likewise necessary that the end be kept in view and that the steps necessary to reach the standard be always in the eye.



CHAPTER 10

Prayer Born of Compassion

Open your New Testament, take it with you to your knees, and set Jesus Christ out of it before you. Are you like David in the sixty-third Psalm? Is your soul thirsting for God, and is your flesh longing for God in a dry and thirsty land where no water is? Then set Jesus at the well of Samaria before the eyes of your thirsty heart And, again set him before your heart when he stood on the last day, that great day of the feast, and cried, saying, "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Or, are you like David after the matter of Uriah? "For, day and night, thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drouth [drought] of summer." Then set him before you who says: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." . . . Or are you the unhappy father of a prodigal son? Then, set your Father in Heaven always before you: and set the Son of God always before you, as he composes and preaches the parable of all parables for you and your son.

— Dr. Alexander White



We speak here more particularly of spiritual compassion, that which is born in a renewed heart, and which finds hospitality there. This compassion has in it the quality of mercy, is of the nature of pity, and moves the soul with tenderness of feeling for others. Compassion is moved at the sight of sin, sorrow and suffering. It stands at the other extreme to indifference of spirit to the wants and

woes of others, and is far removed from insensibility and hardness of heart, in the midst of want and trouble and wretchedness. Compassion stands besides sympathy for others, is interested in them, and is concerned about them.

That which excites and develops compassion and puts it to work, is the sight of multitudes in want and distress, and helpless to relieve themselves. Helplessness especially appeals to compassion. Compassion is silent but does not remain secluded. It goes out at the sight of trouble, sin and need. Compassion runs out in earnest prayer, first of all, for those for whom it feels, and has a sympathy for them. Prayer for others is born of a sympathetic heart. Prayer is natural and almost spontaneous when compassion is begotten in the heart. Prayer belongs to the compassionate man.

There is a certain compassion which belongs to the natural man, which expends its force in simple gifts to those in need, not to be despised. But spiritual compassion, the kind born in a renewed heart, which is Christly in its nature, is deeper, broader and more prayerlike. Christly compassion always moves to prayer. This sort of compassion goes beyond the relief of mere bodily wants, and saying, "Be ye warmed—be ye clothed." It reaches deeper down and goes much farther.

Compassion is not blind. Rather we should say, that compassion is not born of blindness. He who has compassion of soul has eyes, first of all, to see the things which excite compassion. He who has no eyes to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the wants and woes of humanity, will never have compassion for humanity. It is written of our Lord that "when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them." First, seeing the multitudes, with their hunger, their woes and their helpless condition, then compassion. Then prayer for the multitudes. Hard is he, and far from being Christlike, who sees the multitudes, and is unmoved at the sight of their sad state, their unhappiness and their peril. He has no heart of prayer for men.

Compassion may not always move men, but [it] is always moved toward men. Compassion may not always turn men to God, but it will, and does, turn God to man. And where it is most helpless to relieve the needs of others, it can at least break out into prayer to God for others. Compassion is never indifferent, selfish, and forgetful of others. Compassion has alone to do with others. The fact that the multitudes were as sheep having no shepherd, was the one thing which appealed to our Lord's compassionate nature. Then their hunger

moved him, and the sight of the sufferings and diseases of these multitudes stirred the pity of his heart.

*Father of mercies, send thy grace
All powerful from above,
To form in our obedient souls
The image of thy love.*

*O may our sympathizing breasts
That generous pleasure know;
Kindly to share in others' joy,
And weep for others' woe.*

But compassion has not alone to do with the body and its disabilities and needs. The soul's distressing state, its needs, and danger, all appeal to compassion. The highest state of grace is known by the infallible mark of compassion for poor sinners. This sort of compassion belongs to grace, and sees not alone the bodies of men, but their immortal spirits, soiled by sin, unhappy in their condition without God, and in imminent peril of being forever lost. When compassion beholds this sight of dying men hurrying to the bar of God, then it is that it breaks out into intercessions for sinful men. Then it is that compassion speaks out after this fashion:

*But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thy own all saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.*

The prophet Jeremiah declares this about God, giving the reason why sinners are not consumed by his wrath: "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not."

And it is this divine quality in us which makes us so much like God. So we find the Psalmist describing the righteous man who is pronounced blessed by God: "He is gracious and full of compassion, and righteous."

And as giving great encouragement to penitent praying sinners, the Psalmist thus records some of the striking attributes of the divine character: "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy."

It is no wonder, then, that we find it recorded several times of our Lord while on earth, that "he was moved with compassion." Can anyone doubt that

his compassion moved him to pray for those suffering, sorrowing ones who came across his pathway?

Paul was wonderfully interested in the religious welfare of his Jewish brethren, was concerned over them, and his heart was strangely warmed with tender compassion for their salvation, even though mistreated and sorely persecuted by them. In writing to the Romans, we hear him thus express himself:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

What marvelous compassion is here described for Paul's own nation! What wonder that a little later on he records his desire and prayer: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

We have an interesting case in Matthew, which gives us an account of what excited so largely the compassion of our Lord at one time:

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

It seems from parallel statements that our Lord had called his disciples aside to rest awhile, exhausted as he and they were by the excessive drafts [demands] on them, by the ceaseless contact with the persons who were ever coming and going, and by their exhaustive toil in ministering to the immense multitudes. But the multitudes precede him, and instead of finding wilderness—solitude, quiet and repose—he finds great multitudes, eager to see and hear, and to be healed. His compassions are moved. The ripened harvests need laborers. He did not call these laborers at once, by sovereign authority, but charges the disciples to betake themselves to God in prayer, asking him to send forth laborers into his harvest.

Here is the urgency of prayer enforced by the compassions of our Lord. It is prayer born of compassion for perishing humanity. Prayer is pressed on the church for laborers to be sent into the harvest of the Lord. The harvest will go to waste and perish without the laborers, while the laborers must be God-chosen,

God-sent, and God commissioned. But God does not send these laborers into his harvest without prayer. The failure of the laborers is owing to the failure of prayer. The scarcity of laborers in the harvest is due to the fact that the church fails to pray for laborers according to his command.

The ingathering of the harvests of earth for the granaries of Heaven is dependent on the prayers of God's people. Prayer secures the laborers sufficient in quantity and in quality for all the needs of the harvest. God's chosen laborers, God's endowed laborers, and God's thrust-forth laborers, are the only ones who will truly go, filled with Christly compassion and endued with Christly power, whose going will avail, and these are secured by prayer. Christ's people on their knees, with Christ's compassion in their hearts for dying men and for needy souls, exposed to eternal peril, is the pledge of laborers in numbers and character to meet the wants of earth and the purposes of Heaven.

God is sovereign of the earth and of Heaven, and the choice of laborers in his harvest he delegates to no one else. Prayer honors him as sovereign and moves him to his wise and holy selection. We will have to put prayer to the front ere the fields of paganism will be successfully tilled for Christ. God knows his men, and he likewise knows full well his work. Prayer gets God to send forth the best men and the most fit men and the men best qualified to work in the harvest. Moving [promoting] the missionary cause by forces this side of God has been its bane, its weakness, and its failure. Compassion for the world of sinners, fallen in Adam, but redeemed in Christ, will move the church to pray for them and stir the church to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest.

*Lord of the harvest hear
Thy needy servants' cry;
Answer our faith's effectual prayer,
And all our wants, supply.*

*Convert and send forth more
Into thy church abroad;
And let them speak thy word of power,
As workers with their God.*

What a comfort and what hope there is to fill our breasts when we think of one in Heaven who ever liveth to intercede for us, because "his compassion fails not!" Above everything else, we have a compassionate Savior, one "who

can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them who are out of the way, for that he himself is compassed about with infirmity." The compassion of our Lord well fits [equips] him for being the Great High Priest of Adam's fallen, lost, and helpless race.

And if he is filled with such compassion that it moves him at the Father's right hand to intercede for us, then by every token, we should have the same compassion, on the ignorant and those out of the way, exposed to divine wrath, as would move us to pray for them. Just in so far as we are compassionate will we be prayerful for others. Compassion does not expend its force in simply saying, "Be ye warmed; be ye clothed," but drives us to our knees in prayer for those who need Christ and his grace.

*The Son of God in tears
The wondering angels see;
Be thou astonished, O my soul!
He shed those tears for thee.*

*He wept that we might weep;
Each sin demands a tear;
In Heaven alone no sin is found,
And there's no weeping there.*

Jesus Christ was altogether man. While he was the divine Son of God, yet at the same time, he was the human Son of God. Christ had a preeminently human side, and, here, compassion reigned. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. At one time how the flesh seems to have weakened under the fearful strain upon him, and how he must have inwardly shrunk under the pain and pull! Looking up to Heaven, he prays, "Father, save me from this hour." How the Spirit nerves and holds—"but for this cause came I to this hour." Only he can solve this mystery who has followed his Lord in straits and gloom and pain, and realized that the "spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

All this but fitted our Lord to be a compassionate Savior. It is no sin to feel the pain and realize the darkness on the path into which God leads [him]. It is only human to cry out against the pain, the terror, and desolation of that hour. It is divine to cry out to God in that hour, even while shrinking and sinking down, "For this cause came I unto this hour." Shall I fail through the weakness of the flesh? No. "Father, glorify thy name." How strong it makes us, and how true, to have one pole star to guide us to the glory of God!



CHAPTER I I

Concerted Prayer

A tourist, in climbing an Alpine summit, finds himself tied by a strong rope to his trusty guide, and to three of his fellow-tourists. As they skirt a perilous precipice he cannot pray, "Lord, hold up my goings in a safe path, that my footsteps slip not, but as to my guide and companions, they must look out for themselves." The only proper prayer in such a case is, "Lord, hold up our goings in a safe path; for if one slips, all of us may perish."

—H. Clay Trumbull



The pious Quesnel says that "God is found in union and agreement. Nothing is more efficacious than this in prayer."

Intercessions combine with prayers and supplications. The word does not mean necessarily, prayer in relation to others. It means a coming together, a falling in with a most intimate friend, for free, unrestrained communion. It implies prayer, free, familiar and bold.

Our Lord deals with this question of the concert of prayer in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. He deals with the benefit and energy resulting from the aggregation of prayer forces. The prayer principle and the prayer promise will be best understood in the connection in which it was made by our Lord:

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy

brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven." Again I say unto you, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them."

This represents the church in prayer to enforce discipline, in order that its members who have been overtaken by faults, may yield readily to the disciplinary process. In addition, it is the church called together in a concert of prayer in order to repair the waste and friction ensuing upon the cutting off of a church offender. This last direction, as to a concert of prayer, is that the whole matter may be referred to Almighty God for his approval and ratification.

All this means that the main, the concluding, and the all powerful agency in the church is prayer, whether it be, as we have seen in Matthew 9, to thrust out laborers into God's earthly harvest fields, or to exclude from the church a violator of unity, law and order, who will neither listen to his brethren nor repent and confess his fault.

It means that church discipline, now a lost art in the modern church, must go hand in hand with prayer, and that the church which has no disposition to separate wrong doers from the church, and which has no excommunication spirit for incorrigible offenders against law and order, will have no communication with God. Church purity must precede the church's prayers. The unity of discipline in the church precedes the unity of prayers by the church.

Let it be noted with emphasis that a church which is careless of discipline will be careless in praying. A church which tolerates evil doers in its communion, will cease to pray, will cease to pray with agreement, and will cease to be a church gathered together in prayer in Christ's name.

This matter of church discipline is an important one in the Scriptures. The need of watchfulness over the lives of its members belongs to the church of God. The church is an organization for mutual help, and it is charged with the watch care of all of its members. Disorderly conduct cannot be passed by

unnoticed. The course of procedure in such cases is clearly given in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, which has been heretofore referred to. Furthermore, Paul, in Galatians 6:1, gives explicit directions as to those who fall into sin in the church:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.

The work of the church is not alone to *seek* members but it is to watch over and guard them, *after* they have entered the church. And if any are overtaken by sin, they must be sought out, and if they cannot be cured of their faults, then excision must take place. This is the doctrine our Lord lays down.

It is somewhat striking that the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2), though it had left its first love, and had sadly declined in vital godliness and in those things which make up spiritual life, yet it receives credit for this good quality: "Thou canst not bear them that are evil."

While [in another case,] the church at Pergamos was admonished because it had there among its membership those who taught such hurtful doctrines that were a stumbling-block to others. And not so much that such characters were *in* the church, but that they were *tolerated*. The impression is that the church leaders were blind to the presence of such hurtful characters, and hence were indisposed to administer discipline. This indisposition was an unfailing sign of prayerlessness in the membership. There was no union of prayer-effort looking to cleansing the church and keeping it clean.

This disciplinary idea stands out prominently in the apostle Paul's writings to the churches. The church at Corinth had a notorious case of fornication where a man had married his step-mother, and this church had been careless about this iniquity. Paul rather sharply reprov'd this church and gave explicit command to this effect: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here was concert of action on the part of praying people, demanded by Paul.

As good a church as that at Thessalonica needed instruction and caution on this matter of looking after disorderly persons. So we hear Paul saying unto them:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.

Mark you: it is not the mere presence of disorderly persons in a church which merits the displeasure of God. It is when they are tolerated under the mistaken plea of "bearing with them," and no steps are taken either to cure them of their evil practices or exclude them from the fellowship of the church. And this glaring neglect, on the part of the church, of its wayward members is but a sad sign of a lack of praying—for a praying church, given to mutual praying, agreement praying, is keen to discern when a brother is overtaken in a fault, and seeks either to restore him, or to cut him off if he be incorrigible.

Much of this dates back to the lack of spiritual vision on the part of church leaders. The Lord by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah once asked the very pertinent, suggestive question, "And who is blind, but my servant?" This blindness in leadership in the church is no more patent than in this question of seeing evil doers in the church, in caring for them, and when the effort to restore them fails, to withdraw fellowship from them and let them be "as a heathen man and a publican." The truth is, there is such a lust for members in the church in these modern times, that the officials and preachers have entirely lost sight of the members who have violated baptismal covenants, and who are living in open disregard of God's Word. The idea now is quantity in membership, not quality. The purity of the church is put in the background in the craze to secure numbers, and to pad the church rolls and make large figures in statistical columns. Prayer, much prayer, mutual prayer, would bring the church back to scriptural standards, and would purge the church of many wrongdoers, while it might cure not a few of their evil lives.

Prayer and church discipline are not new revelations of the Christian dispensation. These two things had a high place in the Jewish church. Instances are too numerous to mention all of them. Ezra is a case in point. When he returned from the captivity, he found a sad and distressing condition of things among the Lord's people who were left in the land. They had not separated themselves from the surrounding heathen people, and had intermarried with them, contrary to divine commands. And those high in the church were involved, the priests and the Levites with others. Ezra was greatly moved at the account given him, and rent his garments and wept and prayed. Evil doers in the church did not meet his approval, nor did he shut his eyes to them nor excuse them, neither did he compromise the situation. When he had finished

confessing the sins of the people, and his praying, the people assembled themselves before him and joined him in a covenant agreement to put away from them their evil doings, and wept and prayed in company with Ezra.

The result was that the people thoroughly repented of their transgressions, and Israel was reformed. Praying and a good man, who was neither blind nor unconcerned, did the deed.

Of Ezra it is written, "For he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away." So it is with every praying man in the church when he has eyes to see the transgression of evil doers in the church, who has a heart to grieve over them and who has a spirit in him so concerned about the church that he prays about it.

Blessed is that church who has praying leaders, who can see that which is disorderly in the church, who are grieved about it, and who put forth their hands to correct the evils which harm God's cause as a weight to its progress. One point in the indictment against those "Who are at ease in Zion," referred to by Amos, is that "they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." And this same indictment could be brought against church leaders of modern times. They are not grieved because the members are engulfed in a craze for worldly, carnal things, nor when there are those in the church walking openly in disorder, whose lives scandalize religion. Of course such leaders do not pray over the matter, for praying would beget a spirit of solicitude in them for these evil doers, and would drive away the spirit of unconcern which possesses them.

It would be well for prayerless church leaders and careless pastors to read the account of the ink horn man in Ezekiel, 9th chapter, where God instructed the prophet to send through the city certain men who would destroy those in the city, because of the great evils found therein. But certain persons were to be spared. These were they who "sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the city." The man with the ink horn was to mark every one of these sighers and mourners, so that they would escape the impending destruction. Please note that the instructions were that the slaying of those who did *not* mourn and sigh should "begin at my sanctuary."

What a lesson for non-praying, unconcerned officials of the modern church! How few there are who "sigh and cry" for present-day abominations in the land, and who are grieved over the desolations of Zion! What need for

"two or three to be gathered together" in a concert of prayer over these conditions, and in the secret place weep and pray for the sins in Zion!

This concert of prayer, this agreement in praying, taught by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, finds proof and illustration elsewhere. This was the kind of prayer which Paul referred to in his request to his Roman brethren, recorded in Romans 15:30:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea.

Here is unity in prayer, prayer by agreement, and prayer which drives directly at deliverance from unbelieving and evil men, the same kind of prayer urged by our Lord, and the end practically the same, deliverance from unbelieving men, that deliverance wrought either by bringing them to repentance or by exclusion from the church.

The same idea is found in 2 Thes. 3:1:

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.

Here is united prayer requested by an apostle, among other things, for deliverance from wicked men, that same that the church of God needs in this day. By joining their prayers to his, there was the desired end of riddance from men who were hurtful to the church of God and who were a hindrance to the running of the Word of the Lord. Let us ask, are there not in the present-day church those who are a positive hindrance to the on-going of the Word of the Lord? What better course is there than to jointly pray over the question, at the same time using the Christ-given course of discipline first to save them, but failing in that course, to excise them from the body?

Does that seem a harsh course? Then our Lord was guilty of harshness himself, for he ends these directions by saying, "But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

No more is this harshness than is the act of the skillful surgeon, who sees the whole body and its members endangered by a gangrenous limb, and severs the limb from the body for the good of the whole. No more was it harshness in

the captain and crew of the vessel on which Jonah was found, when the storm arose threatening destruction to all on board, to cast the fleeing prophet overboard. What seems harshness, is obedience to God, is for the welfare of the church, and is wise in the extreme.



CHAPTER 12

The Universality of Prayer

It takes more of the power of the Spirit to make the farm, the home, the office, the store, [or] the shop holy than it does to make the church holy. It takes more of the power of the Spirit to make Saturday holy than to make Sunday holy. It takes much more of the power of the Spirit to make money for God than it does to make a talk for God. Much more to live a great life for God than to preach a great sermon.

—Edward M. Bounds



Prayer is far-reaching in its influence and worldwide in its effects. It affects all men, affects them everywhere, and affects them in all things. It touches man's interest in time and eternity. It lays hold upon God and moves him to interfere in the affairs of earth. It moves the angels to minister to men in this life. It restrains and defeats the devil in his schemes to ruin man. Prayer goes everywhere and lays its hand upon everything. There is a universality in prayer. When we talk about prayer and its work, we must use universal terms. It is individual in its application and benefits, but it is general and worldwide at the same time in its good influences. It blesses man in every event of life, furnishes him help in every emergency, and gives him comfort in every trouble. There is no experience through which man is called to go but prayer is there as a helper, a comforter and a guide.

When we speak of the universality of prayer, we discover many sides to it. First, it may be remarked that all men ought to pray. Prayer is intended for all men, because all men need God and need what God has and what prayer only can secure. As men are called upon to pray everywhere, by consequence all men must pray for men are everywhere. Universal terms are used when men are commanded to pray, while there is a promise in universal terms to all who call upon God for pardon, for mercy and for help:

For there is no difference; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

As there is no difference in the state of sin in which men are found, and all men need the saving grace of God which only can bless them, and as this saving grace is obtained only in answer to prayer, therefore all men are called on to pray because of their very needs.

It is a rule of scriptural interpretation that whenever a command issues with no limitation, it is universal in binding force. So the words of the Lord in Isaiah are to the point:

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy, and to our God who will abundantly pardon.

So that as wickedness is universal, and as pardon is needed by all men, so all men must seek the Lord while he may be found, and must call upon him while he is near. Prayer belongs to all men, because all men are redeemed in Christ. It is a privilege for every man to pray, but it is no less a bounden duty for them to call upon God. No sinner is debarred from the mercy seat. All are welcomed to approach the throne of grace with all their wants and woes, with all their sins and burdens.

*Come all the world, come, sinner thou,
All things in Christ are ready now.*

Whenever a poor sinner turns his eyes to God, no matter where he is nor what his guilt and sinfulness, the eye of God is upon him and his ear is opened to his prayers.

The Essentials of Prayer: The Universality of Prayer

But men may pray everywhere, since God is accessible in every clime and under all circumstances. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

No locality is too distant from God on earth to reach Heaven. No place is so remote that God cannot see and hear one who looks toward him and seeks his face. Oliver Holden puts into a hymn these words:

*Then, my soul, in every strait,
To thy Father come and wait;
He will answer every prayer;
God is present everywhere.*

There is just this modification of the idea that one can pray everywhere. Some places, because of the evil business carried on there, or because of the environments which belong there, growing out of the place itself, the moral character of those who carry on the business, and of those who support it, are localities where prayer would not be in place. We might instance the saloon, the theater, the opera, the card table, the dance, and other like places of worldly amusement. Prayer is so much out of place at such places that no one would ever presume to pray. Prayer would be an intrusion, so regarded by the owners, the patrons and the supporters of such places. Furthermore those who attend such places are not praying people. They belong almost entirely to the prayerless crowd of worldlings.

While we are to pray everywhere, it unquestionably means that we are not to frequent places where we cannot pray. To pray everywhere is to pray in all legitimate places, and to attend especially those places where prayer is welcome, and is given a gracious hospitality. To pray everywhere is to preserve the spirit of prayer in places of business, in our intercourse with men, and in the privacy of the home amid all of its domestic cares.

The model prayer of our Lord, called familiarly "The Lord's Prayer," is the universal prayer, because it is peculiarly adapted to all men everywhere in all circumstances in all times of need. It can be put in the mouths of all people in all nations, and in all times. It is a model of praying which needs no amendment nor alteration for every family, people and nation.

Furthermore, prayer has its universal application in that all men are to be the subjects of prayer. All men everywhere are to be prayed for. Prayer must take in all of Adam's fallen race because all men are fallen in Adam, redeemed

in Christ, and are benefitted by prayers for them. This is Paul's doctrine in his prayer directory in 1 Tim. 2:1: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men."

There is strong scriptural warrant, therefore, for reaching out and embracing all men in our prayers, since not only are we commanded thus to pray for them, but the reason given is that Christ gave himself a ransom for all men, and all men are provisionally beneficiaries of the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

But lastly, and more at length, prayer has a universal side in that all things which concern us are to be prayed about, while all things which are for our good—physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and eternal—are subjects of prayer. Before, however, we consider this phase of prayer let us stop and again look at the universal prayer for all men. As a special class to be prayed for, we may mention those who have control in state or who bear rule in the church. Prayer has mighty potencies. It makes good rulers, and makes them better rulers. It restrains the lawless and the despotic. Rulers are to be prayed for. They are not out of the reach and the control of prayer, because they are not out of the reach and control of God. Wicked Nero was on the throne of Rome when Paul wrote these words to Timothy, urging prayer for those in authority.

Christian lips are to breathe prayers for the cruel and infamous rulers in state as well as for the righteous and the benign governors and princes. Prayer is to be as far-reaching as the race, "for all men." Humanity is to burden our hearts as we pray, and all men are to engage our thoughts in approaching a throne of grace. In our praying hours, all men must have a place. The wants and woes of the entire race are to broaden and make tender our sympathies, and inflame our petitions. No little man can pray. No man with narrow views of God, of his plan to save men, and of the universal needs of all men, can pray effectually. It takes a broad-minded man, who understands God and his purposes in the atonement, to pray well. No cynic can pray. Prayer is the divinest philanthropy, as well as giant-great-heartedness. Prayer comes from a big heart, filled with thoughts about all men and with sympathies for all men.

Prayer runs parallel with the will of God, "who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Prayer reaches up to Heaven, and brings Heaven down to earth. Prayer has in its hands a double blessing. It rewards him who prays, and blesses him who is prayed for. It brings peace to warring passions and calms warring

elements. Tranquility is the happy fruit of true praying. There is an inner calm which comes to him who prays, and an outer calm as well. Prayer creates "quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

Right praying not only makes life beautiful in peace, but redolent in righteousness and weighty in influence. Honesty, gravity, integrity and weight in character are the natural and essential fruits of prayer.

It is this kind of worldwide, large-hearted, unselfish praying which pleases God well, and which is acceptable in his sight, because it cooperates with his will and runs in gracious streams to all men and to each man. It is this kind of praying which the man Christ Jesus did when on earth, and the same kind which he is now doing at his Father's right hand in Heaven, as our mighty intercessor. He is the pattern of prayer. He is between God and man, the one mediator, who gave himself a ransom for all men, and for each man.

So it is that true prayer links itself to the will of God, and runs in streams of solicitude, and compassion, and intercession for men. As Jesus Christ died for everyone involved in the fall, so prayer girdles everyone and gives itself for the benefit of everyone. Like our one mediator between God and man, he who prays stands midway between God and man, with prayers, supplications, "and strong cryings and tears." Prayer holds in its grasp the movements of the race of man, and embraces the destinies of men for all eternity. The king and the beggar are both affected by it. It touches Heaven and moves earth. Prayer holds earth to Heaven and brings Heaven in close contact with earth.

*Your guides and brethren bear
Forever on your mind;
Extend the arms of mighty prayer
In grasping all mankind.*



CHAPTER 13

Prayer and Missions

One day, about this time, I heard an unusual bleating amongst my few remaining goats, as if they were being killed or tortured. I rushed to the goat-house and found myself instantly surrounded by a band of armed men. The snare had caught me, their weapons were raised, and I expected the next moment to die. But God moved me to talk to them firmly and kindly; I warned them of their sin and its punishment; I showed them that only my love and pity led me to remain there seeking their good, and that if they killed me, they killed their best friend. I further assured them I was not afraid to die, for at death my Savior would take me to Heaven and that I would be far happier than on earth; and that my only desire to live was to make them happy by teaching them to love Jesus Christ my Lord. I then lifted up my hands and eyes to the heavens and prayed aloud for Jesus to bless all my Tannese¹ and to protect me or take me to Heaven as he saw to be for the best. One after another they slipped away from me, and Jesus restrained them again. Did ever mother run more quickly to protect her crying child in danger's hour than the Lord Jesus hastens to answer believing prayer, and send help to his servants in his own good time and way, so far as it shall be for their good and his glory?

— John G. Paton

Missions mean the giving of the gospel to those of Adam's fallen race who have never heard of Christ and his atoning death. It means the giving to others the opportunity to hear of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, and

¹ Tannese: native of Tanna, a town in Vanuatu, a south Pacific island nation. Paton (1824–1907) was a missionary there, starting in 1858.

allowing others to have a chance to receive and accept the blessings of the Gospel, as we have it in Christianised lands. It means that those who enjoy the benefits of the Gospel give these same religious advantages and Gospel privileges to all of mankind. Prayer has a great deal to do with missions. Prayer is the handmaid of missions. The success of all real missionary effort is dependent on prayer. The life and spirit of missions are the life and spirit of prayer. Both prayer and missions were born in the divine mind. Prayer and missions are bosom companions. Prayer creates and makes missions successful, while missions lean heavily on prayer. In Psalm 72, one which deals with the Messiah, it is stated that "prayer shall be made for him continually." Prayer would be made for his coming to save man, and prayer would be made for the success of the plan of salvation which he would come to set on foot [begin].

The spirit of Jesus Christ is the spirit of missions. Our Lord Jesus Christ was himself the first missionary. His promise and advent composed the first missionary movement. The missionary spirit is not simply a phase of the Gospel, not a mere feature of the plan of salvation, but is its very spirit and life. The missionary movement is the church of Jesus Christ marching in militant array, with the design of possessing the whole world of mankind for Christ. Whoever is touched by the Spirit of God is fired by the missionary spirit. An anti-missionary Christian is a contradiction in terms. We might say that it would be impossible to be an anti-missionary Christian because of the impossibility for the divine and human forces to put men in such a state as not to align them with the missionary cause. Missionary impulse is the heartbeat of our Lord Jesus Christ, sending the vital forces of himself through the whole body of the church. The spiritual life of God's people rises or falls with the force of those heartbeats. When these life forces cease, then death ensues. So that anti-missionary churches are dead churches, just as anti-missionary Christians are dead Christians.

The craftiest wile of Satan, if he cannot prevent a great movement for God, is to debauch the movement. If he can put the movement first, and the spirit of the movement in the background, he has materialized and thoroughly debauched the movement. Mighty prayer only will save the movement from being materialized, and keep the spirit of the movement strong and controlling.

The key of all missionary success is prayer. That key is in the hands of the home churches. The trophies won by our Lord in heathen lands will be won by

praying missionaries, not by professional workers in foreign lands. More especially will this success be won by saintly praying in the churches at home. The home church—on her knees, fasting and praying—is the great base of spiritual supplies, the sinews of war, and the pledge of victory in this dire and final conflict. Financial resources are not the real sinews of war in this fight. Machinery in itself carries no power to break down heathen walls, open effectual doors, and win heathen hearts to Christ. Prayer alone can do the deed.

Aaron and Hur did not more surely give victory to Israel through Moses,² than a praying church through Jesus Christ will give victory on every battlefield in heathen lands. It is as true in foreign fields as it is in home lands. The praying church wins the contest. The home church has done but a paltry thing when she has furnished the money to establish missions and support her missionaries. Money is important, but money without prayer is powerless in the face of the darkness, the wretchedness, and the sin in unchristianised lands. Prayerless giving breeds barrenness and death. Poor praying at home is the solution of poor results in the foreign field. Prayerless giving is the secret of all crises in the missionary movements of the day, and is the occasion of the accumulation of debts in missionary boards.

It is all right to urge men to give of their means to the missionary cause. But it is much more important to urge them to give their prayers to the movement. Foreign missions need—today—more the power of prayer, than the power of money. Prayer can make even poverty in the missionary cause move on amidst difficulties and hindrances. Much money without prayer is helpless and powerless, in the face of the utter darkness and sin and wretchedness on the foreign field.

This is peculiarly a missionary age. Protestant Christianity is stirred as it never was before in the line of aggression in pagan lands. The missionary movement has taken on proportions that awaken hope, kindle enthusiasm, and which demand the attention, if not the interest, of the coldest and the most lifeless. Nearly every church has caught the contagion, and the sails of their proposed missionary movements are spread wide to catch the favoring breezes. Herein is the danger just now, that the missionary movement will go ahead of the missionary spirit. This has always been the peril of the church,

² Exodus 17:12. Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands so that the Israelites would win a battle due to God's intervention.

losing the substance in the shade, losing the spirit in the outward shell, and contenting itself in the mere parade of the movement, putting the force of effort in the movement and not in the spirit.

The magnificence of this movement may not only blind us to the spirit of it, but the spirit which should give life and shape to the movement may be lost in the wealth of the movement, as the ship, borne by favoring winds, may be lost when these winds swell to a storm.

Not a few of us have heard eloquent and earnest speeches stressing the imperative need of money for missions—where we have heard [only] one stressing the imperative need of prayer. All our plans and devices drive to the one end of raising money, not to quicken faith and promote prayer. The common idea among church leaders is that if we get the money, prayer will come as a matter of course. *The very reverse is the truth.* If we get the church at the business of praying, and thus secure the spirit of missions, money will more than likely come as a matter of course. Spiritual agencies and spiritual forces never come as a matter of course. Spiritual duties and spiritual factors, left to the “matter of course” law, will surely fall out and die. Only the things which are stressed, live and rule in the spiritual realm. They who give, will not necessarily pray. Many in our churches are liberal givers, who are noted for their prayerlessness. One of the evils of the present-day missionary movement lies just there. Giving is entirely removed from prayer. Prayer receives scant attention, while giving stands out prominently. They who truly pray will be moved to give. Praying creates the giving spirit. The praying ones will give liberally and self-denyingly. He who enters his closet to God, will also open his purse to God. But perfunctory, grudging, assessment-giving kills the very spirit of prayer. Emphasizing the material to the neglect of the spiritual, by an inexorable law, retires and discounts the spiritual.

It is truly wonderful how great a part money plays in the modern religious movements, and how little prayer plays in them. In striking contrast with that statement, it is marvelous how little part money played in primitive Christianity as a factor in spreading the Gospel, and how wonderful [a] part prayer played in it.

The grace of giving is nowhere cultured to a richer growth than in the closet. If all our missionary boards and secretaryships were turned into praying bands, until the agony of real prayer and travail with Christ for a perishing

world came on them—real estate, bank stocks, United States bonds would be in the market for the spreading of Christ's Gospel among men. If the spirit of prayer prevailed, missionary boards whose individual members are worth millions, would not be staggering under a load of debt, and great churches would not have a yearly deficit and a yearly grumbling, grudging, and pressure to pay a beggarly assessment to support a mere handful of missionaries, with the additional humiliation of debating the question of recalling some of them. The on-going of Christ's kingdom is locked up in the closet of prayer by Christ himself, and not in the contribution box.

The prophet Isaiah, looking down the centuries with the vision of a seer, thus expresses his purpose to continue in prayer and give God no rest till Christ's kingdom be established among men:

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest till the righteousness thereof goeth forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Then, foretelling the final success of the Christian church, he thus speaks:

And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

Then the Lord himself, by the mouth of this evangelical prophet, declares as follows:

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence. And give him no rest till he establish and 'till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

In the margin of our Bible, it reads, "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers." The idea is, that these praying ones are those who are the Lord's remembrancers, those who remind him of what he has promised, and who give him no rest till God's church is established in the earth.

And one of the leading petitions in the Lord's Prayer deals with this same question of the establishing of God's kingdom and the progress of the Gospel, in the short, pointed petition, "Thy kingdom come," with the added words, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven."

The missionary movement in the apostolic church was born in an atmosphere of fasting and prayer. The very movement looking to offering the blessings of the Christian church to the Gentiles, was on the housetop on the occasion when Peter went up there to pray, and God showed him his divine purpose to extend the privileges of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile.

But more specifically, Paul and Barnabas were definitely called and set apart to the missionary field at Antioch, when the church there had fasted and prayed. It was then the Holy Spirit answered from Heaven: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Please note this was not the call to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, but more particularly their definite call to the foreign field. Paul had been called to the ministry years before this, even at his conversion. This was a subsequent call to a work born of special and continued prayer in the church at Antioch. God calls men not only to the ministry, but to be missionaries. Missionary work is God's work. And it is the God-called men who are to do it. These are the kind of missionaries which have wrought well and successfully in the foreign field in the past, and the same kind will do the work in the future—or it will not be done.

It is praying missionaries who are needed for the work, and it is a praying church who sends them out, [and it is these] which are prophecies of the success which is promised. The sort of religion to be exported by missionaries is of the praying sort. The religion to which the heathen world is to be converted is a religion of prayer, and a religion of prayer to the true God. The heathen world already prays to its idols and false gods. But they are to be taught by praying missionaries, sent out by a praying church, to cast away their idols and to begin to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. No prayerless church can transport to heathen lands a praying religion. No prayerless missionary can bring heathen idolaters who know not our God to their knees, to true prayer, until he becomes preeminently a man of prayer. As it takes praying men at home to do God's work, none the less does it take praying missionaries to bring those who sit in darkness to the light.

The most noted and most successful missionaries have been preeminently men of prayer. David Livingstone, William Taylor, Adoniram Judson, Henry Martyn, and Hudson Taylor, with many more, form a band of illustrious praying men whose impress and influence still abide where they labored. No

prayerless man is wanted for this job. Above everything else, the primary qualification for every missionary is prayer. Let him be, above everything else, a man of prayer. And when the crowning day comes, and the records are made up and read at the great judgment day, then it will appear how well praying men wrought in the hard fields of heathendom, and how much was due to them in laying the foundations of Christianity in those fields.

The one [and] only condition which is to give worldwide power to this Gospel, is prayer, and the spread of this Gospel will depend on prayer. The energy which was to give it marvelous momentum and conquering power over all its malignant and powerful foes, is the energy of prayer.

The fortunes of the kingdom of Jesus Christ are not made by the feebleness of its foes. They are strong and bitter and have ever been strong, and ever will be. But mighty prayer—this is the one great spiritual force which will enable the Lord Jesus Christ to enter into full possession of his kingdom, and secure for him the heathen as his inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for his possession.

It is prayer which will enable him to break his foes with a rod of iron, that will make these foes tremble in their pride and power, who are but frail potter's vessels, to be broken in pieces by one stroke of his hand. A person who can pray is the mightiest instrument Christ has in this world. A praying church is stronger than all the gates of Hell.

God's decree for the glory of his Son's kingdom is dependent on prayer for its fulfillment: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession." God the Father gives nothing to his Son—only [except] through prayer. And the reason why the church has not received more in the missionary work in which it is engaged, is the lack of prayer. "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

Every dispensation—foreshadowing the coming of Christ, when the world has been evangelized, at the end of time—rests upon these constitutional provisions: God's decree, his promises, and prayer. However far away that day of victory by distance, or time, or remoteness of shadowy type, prayer is the essential condition on which the dispensation becomes strong, typical and representative. From Abraham—the first of the nation of the Israelites, the friend of God—down to this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, this has been true.

*The nations call! From sea to sea
Extends the thrilling cry,
"Come over, Christians, if there be,
And help us, ere we die."*

*Our hearts, O Lord, the summons feel;
Let hand with heart combine,
And answer to the world's appeal,
By giving "that is thine."*

Our Lord's plan for securing workers in the foreign missionary field is the same plan he set on foot for obtaining preachers. It is by the process of praying. It is the prayer plan, as distinguished from all man-made plans. These mission workers are to be "sent men." God must send them. They are God-called, divinely moved to this great work. They are inwardly moved to enter the harvest fields of the world and gather sheaves for the heavenly garnerers. Men do not choose to be missionaries any more than they choose to be preachers. God sends out laborers in his harvest field in answer to the prayers of his church. Here is the divine plan as set forth by our Lord:

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

It is the business of the home church to do the praying. It is the Lord's business to call and send forth the laborers. The Lord does not do the praying. The church does not do the calling. And just as our Lord's compassions were aroused by the sight of multitudes—w weary, hungry, and scattered, exposed to evils, as sheep having no shepherd—so whenever the church has eyes to see the vast multitudes of earth's inhabitants—descendants of Adam, weary in soul, living in darkness, and wretched and sinful—will it be moved to compassion, and begin to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.

Missionaries, like ministers, are born of praying people. A praying church begets laborers in the harvest-field of the world. The scarcity of missionaries argues a non-praying church. It is all right to send trained men to the foreign field, but first of all they must be God-sent. The sending is the fruit of prayer.

As praying men are the occasion of sending them, so in turn the workers must be praying men. And the prime mission of these praying missionaries is to convert prayerless heathen men into praying men. Prayer is the proof of their calling, their divine credentials, and their work.

He who is not a praying man at home needs the one fitness [that of prayer] to become a mission worker abroad. He who has not the spirit which moves him toward sinners at home, will hardly have a spirit of compassion for sinners abroad. Missionaries are not made of men who are failures at home. He who will be a man of prayer abroad must, before anything else, be a man of prayer in his home church. If he be not engaged in turning sinners away from their prayerless ways at home, he will hardly succeed in turning away the heathen from their prayerless ways. In other words, it takes the same spiritual qualifications for being a home worker as it does for being a foreign worker.

God in his own way, in answer to the prayers of his church, calls men into his harvest-fields. Sad will be the day when missionary boards and churches overlook that fundamental fact, and send out their own chosen men, independent of God.

Is the harvest great? Are the laborers few? Then "pray ye the Lord of the harvest, to send forth laborers into his harvest." Oh, that a great wave of prayer would sweep over the church, asking God to send out a great army of laborers into the needy harvest fields of the earth! No danger of the Lord of the harvest sending out too many laborers and crowding the fields. He who calls, will most certainly provide the means for supporting those whom he calls and sends forth.

The one great need in the modern missionary movement is *intercessors*. They were scarce in the days of Isaiah. This was his complaint: "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor."

So today there is great need of intercessors, first, for the needy harvest-fields of earth, born of a Christly compassion for the thousands without the Gospel; and then intercessors for laborers to be sent forth by God into the needy fields of earth.



POWER THROUGH PRAYER



ORIGINAL FOREWORD

Power through Prayer has been called “one of the truly great masterpieces on the theme of prayer.” The term “classic” can appropriately be applied to this outstanding book.

In twenty provocative and inspiring chapters, each prefaced with quotations from spiritual giants, Edward M. Bounds stresses the imperative of vital prayer in the life of a pastor. He says, “. . . every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry, is weak as a factor in God’s work and is powerless to project God’s cause in this world.”

Recreation to a minister must be as whetting is with the mower—that is, to be used only so far as is necessary for his work. May a physician in plague-time take any more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life, when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death, and say: “God doth not require me to make myself a drudge to save them”? Is this the voice of ministerial or Christian compassion or rather of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty?

—Richard Baxter



Misemployment of time is injurious to the mind. In illness I have looked back with self-reproach on days spent in my study; I was wading through history and poetry and monthly journals, but I was in my study! Another man’s trifling is notorious to all observers, but what am I doing? Nothing, perhaps, that has reference to the spiritual good of my congregation. Be much in retirement and prayer. Study the honor and glory of your Master.

—Richard Cecil





CHAPTER I

Men of Prayer Needed

Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. If Satan can only make [you] a covetous minister, a lover of praise, of pleasure, of good eating—he has ruined your ministry. Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, your thoughts, your words from God. Luther spent his best three hours in prayer.

—Robert Murray McCheyne



We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man, or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." The dispensation that heralded and prepared the way for Christ was bound up in that man John. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." The world's salvation comes out of that cradled Son. When Paul appeals to the personal character of the men who rooted [planted] the gospel in the world, he solves the mystery of their success. The glory and efficiency of the gospel is staked

[built] on the men who proclaim it. When God declares that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him," he declares the necessity of men, and his dependence on them as a channel through which to exert his power upon the world. This vital, urgent truth is one that this age of machinery is apt to forget. The forgetting of it is as baneful on the work of God as would be the striking of the sun from his sphere. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.

What the church needs today is not *more* machinery, or *better*—not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.

An eminent historian has said that the accidents of personal character have more to do with the revolutions of nations than either philosophic historians or democratic politicians will allow. This truth has its application in full to the gospel of Christ, the character and conduct of the followers of Christ—Christianize the world, transfigure nations and individuals. Of the preachers of the gospel it is eminently true.

The character as well as the fortunes of the gospel is committed to the preacher. He makes or mars the message from God to man. The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must not only be golden, but open and flawless, that the oil may have a full, unhindered, unwasted flow.

The man makes the preacher. God must make the man. The messenger is, if possible, more than the message. The preacher is more than the sermon. The preacher makes the sermon. As the life-giving milk from the mother's bosom is but the mother's life, so all the preacher says is tintured [colored], impregnated by what the preacher is. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and the taste of the vessel impregnates and may discolor. The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make the man. The true sermon is a thing of life. The sermon grows because the man grows. The sermon is forceful because the man is forceful. The

sermon is holy because the man is holy. The sermon is full of the divine unction because the man is full of the divine unction.

Paul termed it "My gospel"—not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation—but the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul, as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul's sermons—what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives.

The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons *kill*. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher. Under the Jewish dispensation, the high priest had inscribed in jeweled letters on a golden frontlet: "Holiness to the Lord." So every preacher in Christ's ministry must be molded into, and mastered by, this same holy motto. It is a crying shame for the Christian ministry to fall lower in holiness of character and holiness of aim than the Jewish priesthood. Jonathan Edwards said: "I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The Heaven I desired was a Heaven of holiness." The gospel of Christ does not move by popular waves. It has no self-propagating power. It moves as the men who have charge of it move. The preacher must impersonate the gospel. Its divine, most distinctive features must be embodied in him. The constraining power of love must be in the preacher as a projecting, eccentric, an all-commanding, self-oblivious force. The energy of self-denial must be his being, his heart and blood and bones. He must go forth as a man among men, clothed with humility, abiding in meekness, wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove; the bonds of a servant with the spirit of a king, a king in high, royal—in dependent bearing, with the simplicity and sweetness of a child. The preacher must throw himself, with all the abandon of a perfect, self-emptying faith and a self-consuming zeal, into his work for the salvation of men. Hearty, heroic, compassionate, fearless martyrs must the men be who take hold of and shape a generation for God. If they be timid time-servers, place-seekers, if they be men-pleasers or men-fearers, if their faith has a weak

hold on God or his Word, if their denial be broken by any phase of self or the world, they cannot take hold of the church nor the world for God.

The preacher's sharpest and strongest preaching should be to himself. His most difficult, delicate, laborious, and thorough work must be with himself. The training of the twelve was the great, difficult, and enduring work of Christ. Preachers are not sermon makers, but men makers and saint makers, and he only is well-trained for this business who has made himself a man and a saint. It is not great talents nor great learning nor great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God—men always preaching by holy sermons *in* the pulpit, by holy lives *out* of it. These can mold a generation for God.

After this order, the early Christians were formed. Men they were of solid mold, preachers after the heavenly type—heroic, stalwart, soldierly, saintly. Preaching with them meant self-denying, self-crucifying, serious, toilsome, martyr business. They applied themselves to it in a way that told on their generation, and formed in its womb a generation yet unborn for God. The preaching man is to be the praying man. Prayer is the preacher's mightiest weapon. An almighty force in itself, it gives life and force to all.

The real sermon is made in the closet. The man—God's man—is made in the closet. His life and his profoundest convictions were born in his secret communion with God. The burdened and tearful agony of his spirit, his weightiest and sweetest messages were got when alone with God. Prayer makes the man; prayer makes the preacher; prayer makes the pastor.

The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer. Prayer is with the pulpit too often only official—a performance for the routine of service. Prayer is not to the modern pulpit the mighty force it was in Paul's life or Paul's ministry. Every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry, is weak as a factor in God's work, and is powerless to project God's cause in this world.



CHAPTER 2

Our Sufficiency Is of God

But above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behavior, and the fewness and fullness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverend frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his prayer. And truly it was a testimony. He knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men, for they that know him most will see most reason to approach him with reverence and fear.

—William Penn, of George Fox



The sweetest graces by a slight perversion may bear the bitterest fruit. The sun gives life, but sunstrokes are death. Preaching is to give life; it may kill. The preacher holds the keys; he may lock as well as unlock. Preaching is God's great institution for the planting and maturing of spiritual life. When properly executed, its benefits are untold; when wrongly executed, no evil can exceed its damaging results. It is an easy matter to destroy the flock if the shepherd be unwary or the pasture be destroyed, easy to capture the citadel if the watchmen be asleep or the food and water be poisoned. Invested with such gracious prerogatives, exposed to so great evils, involving so many grave responsibilities, it would be a parody on the shrewdness of the devil and a libel on his character and reputation if he did not bring his master influences to

adulterate the preacher and the preaching. In face of all this, the exclamatory interrogatory of Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" is never out of order.

Paul says: "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The true ministry is God-touched, God-enabled, and God-made. The Spirit of God is on the preacher in anointing power, the fruit of the Spirit is in his heart, the Spirit of God has vitalized the man and the word; his preaching gives life, gives life as the spring gives life; gives life as the resurrection gives life; gives ardent life as the summer gives ardent life; gives fruitful life as the autumn gives fruitful life. The life-giving preacher is a man of God, whose heart is ever athirst for God, whose soul is ever following hard after God, whose eye is single to God, and in whom, by the power of God's Spirit, the flesh and the world have been crucified—and his ministry is like the generous flood of a life-giving river.

The preaching that kills is non-spiritual preaching. The ability of the preaching is not from God. Lower sources than God have given to it energy and stimulant. The Spirit is not evident in the preacher nor his preaching. Many kinds of forces may be projected and stimulated by preaching that kills, but they are not spiritual forces. They may resemble spiritual forces, but are only the shadow, the counterfeit; life they may seem to have, but the life is magnetized. The preaching that kills is the letter; shapely and orderly it may be, but it is the letter still, the dry, husky letter, the empty, bald shell. The letter may have the germ of life in it, but it has no breath of spring to evoke it; winter seeds they are, as hard as the winter's soil, as icy as the winter's air, no thawing nor germinating by them. This letter-preaching has the truth. But even divine truth has no life-giving energy alone; it must be energized by the Spirit, with all God's forces at its back. Truth unquickened by God's Spirit deadens as much as, or more than, error. It may be the truth without admixture [undiluted]; but without the Spirit its shade and touch are deadly, its truth error, its light darkness. The letter-preaching is ununctionless, neither mel-
lowed nor oiled by the Spirit. There may be tears, but tears cannot run God's machinery; tears may be but summer's breath on a snow-covered iceberg, nothing but surface slush. Feelings and earnestness there may be, but it is the emotion of the actor and the earnestness of the attorney. The preacher may

feel from the kindling of his own sparks, be eloquent over his own exegesis, earnest in delivering the product of his own brain; the professor may usurp the place and imitate the fire of the apostle; brains and nerves may serve the place and feign the work of God's Spirit, and by these forces the letter may glow and sparkle like an illumined text, but the glow and sparkle will be as barren of life as the field sown with pearls. The death-dealing element lies back of the words, back of the sermon, back of the occasion, back of the manner, back of the action. The great hindrance is in the preacher himself. He has not in himself the mighty life-creating forces. There may be no discount on his orthodoxy, honesty, cleanness, or earnestness; but somehow the man, the inner man, in its secret places, has never broken down and surrendered to God, his inner life is not a great highway for the transmission of God's message, God's power. Somehow self and not God rules in the holy of holiest. Somewhere, all unconscious to himself, some spiritual nonconductor has touched his inner being, and the divine current has been arrested. His inner being has never felt its thorough spiritual bankruptcy, its utter powerlessness; he has never learned to cry out with an ineffable cry of self-despair and self-helplessness till God's power and God's fire comes in and fills, purifies, empowers. Self-esteem, self-ability in some pernicious shape has defamed and violated the temple which should be held sacred for God. Life-giving preaching costs the preacher much—death to self, crucifixion to the world, the travail of his own soul. Crucified preaching only can give life. Crucified preaching can come only from a crucified man.



CHAPTER 3

The Letter Killeth

During this affliction I was brought to examine my life in relation to eternity closer than I had done when in the enjoyment of health. In this examination relative to the discharge of my duties toward my fellow creatures as a man, a Christian minister, and an officer of the church, I stood approved by my own conscience; but in relation to my Redeemer and Savior, the result was different. My returns of gratitude and loving obedience bear no proportion to my obligations for redeeming, preserving, and supporting me through the vicissitudes of life, from infancy to old age. The coldness of my love to him who first loved me and has done so much for me, overwhelmed and confused me; and to complete my unworthy character, I had not only neglected to improve the grace given to the extent of my duty and privilege, but for want of improvement had, while abounding in perplexing care and labor, declined from first zeal and love. I was confounded, humbled myself, implored mercy, and renewed my covenant to strive and devote myself unreservedly to the Lord.

—Bishop McKendree



The preaching that kills may be, and often is, orthodox—dogmatically, inviolably orthodox. We love orthodoxy. It is good. It is the best. It is the clean, clear-cut teaching of God's Word, the trophies won by truth in its conflict with error, the levees which faith has raised against the desolating floods of honest or reckless misbelief or unbelief; but orthodoxy, clear and hard as crystal, suspicious

and militant, may be but the letter well-shaped, well-named, and well-learned, the letter which kills. Nothing is so dead as a dead orthodoxy—too dead to speculate, too dead to think, to study, or to pray.

The preaching that kills may have insight and grasp of principles, may be scholarly and critical in taste, may have every minutia of the derivation and grammar of the letter, may be able to trim the letter into its perfect pattern, and illumine it as Plato and Cicero may be illumined, may study it as a lawyer studies his textbooks to form his brief or to defend his case, and yet be like a frost, a killing frost. Letter-preaching may be eloquent, enameled with poetry and rhetoric, sprinkled with prayer spiced with sensation, illumined by genius—and yet these be but the massive or chaste, costly mountings, the rare and beautiful flowers, which coffin the corpse. The preaching which kills may be without scholarship, unmarked by any freshness of thought or feeling, clothed in tasteless generalities or vapid specialties, with style irregular, slovenly, savoring neither of closet nor of study, graced neither by thought, expression, or prayer. Under such preaching, how wide and utter the desolation! How profound the spiritual death!

This letter-preaching deals with the surface and shadow of things, and not the things themselves. It does not penetrate the inner part. It has no deep insight into, no strong grasp of, the hidden life of God's Word. It is true to the outside, but the outside is the hull which must be broken and penetrated for the kernel. The letter may be dressed so as to attract and be fashionable, but the attraction is not toward God nor is the fashion for Heaven. The failure is in the preacher. God has not made him. He has never been in the hands of God like clay in the hands of the potter. He has been busy about the sermon, its thought and finish, its drawing and impressive forces; but the deep things of God have never been sought, studied, fathomed, experienced by him. He has never stood before "the throne high and lifted up," never heard the seraphim song, never seen the vision nor felt the rush of that awful holiness, and cried out in utter abandon and despair under the sense of weakness and guilt, and had his life renewed, his heart touched, purged, inflamed by the live coal from God's altar. His ministry may draw people to him, to the church, to the form and ceremony; but no true drawings to God, no sweet, holy, divine communion [are] induced. The Church has been frescoed [beautified] but not edified, pleased but not sanctified. Life is suppressed; a chill is on the summer air;

the soil is baked. The city of our God becomes the city of the dead; the church a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching have helped sin, not holiness; peopled Hell, not Heaven.

Preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer, the preacher creates death, and not life. The preacher who is feeble in prayer, is feeble in life-giving forces. The preacher who has retired prayer as a conspicuous and largely prevailing element in his own character, has shorn his preaching of its distinctive life-giving power. Professional praying there is and will be, but professional praying helps the preaching to its deadly work. Professional praying chills and kills both preaching and praying. Much of the lax devotion and lazy, irreverent attitudes in congregational praying are attributable to professional praying in the pulpit. Long, discursive, dry, and inane are the prayers in many pulpits. Without unction or heart, they fall like a killing frost on all the graces of worship. Death-dealing prayers they are. Every vestige of devotion has perished under their breath. The deader they are, the longer they grow. A plea for short praying, live praying, real heart praying, praying by the Holy Spirit—direct, specific, ardent, simple, unctuous, in the pulpit—is in order. A school to teach preachers how to pray, as God counts praying, would be more beneficial to true piety, true worship, and true preaching than all theological schools.

Stop! Pause! Consider! Where are we? What are we doing? Preaching to kill? Praying to kill? Praying to God! The great God, the Maker of all worlds, the Judge of all men! What reverence! What simplicity! What sincerity! What truth in the inward parts is demanded! How real we must be! How hearty! Prayer to God the noblest exercise, the loftiest effort of man, the most real thing! Shall we not discard forever accursed preaching that kills and prayer that kills, and do the real thing, the mightiest thing—prayerful praying, life-creating preaching, bring the mightiest force to bear on Heaven and earth, and draw on God's exhaustless and open treasure for the need and beggary of man?



CHAPTER 4

Tendencies To Be Avoided

Let us often look at Brainerd in the woods of America, pouring out his very soul before God for the perishing heathen, without whose salvation nothing could make him happy. Prayer—secret fervent believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness. A competent knowledge of the language where a missionary lives, a mild and winning temper, a heart given up to God in closet religion—these, these are the attainments which, more than all knowledge, or all other gifts, will fit us to become the instruments of God in the great work of human redemption.

—[William] Carrey's *Brotherhood*, Serampore [India]



There are two extreme tendencies in the ministry. The one is to shut itself out from intercourse with the people. The monk, the hermit, were illustrations of this; they shut themselves out from men to be more with God. They failed, of course. Our being with God is of use only as we expend its priceless benefits on men. This age, neither with preacher nor with people, is much intent on God. Our hankering is not that way. We shut ourselves to our study, we become students, bookworms, Bible worms, sermon makers, noted for literature, thought, and sermons; but the people and God, where are they? Out of heart, out of mind. Preachers who are great thinkers, great students, must be the greatest of prayers, or else they will be the greatest of backsliders, heartless professionals, rationalistic—less than the least of preachers in God's estimate.

The other tendency is to thoroughly popularize the ministry. He [the pastor] is no longer God's man, but a man of affairs, of the people. He prays not, because his mission is to the people. If he can move the people, create an interest, a sensation in favor of religion, an interest in church work—he is satisfied. His personal relation to God is no factor in his work. Prayer has little or no place in his plans. The disaster and ruin of such a ministry cannot be computed by earthly arithmetic. What the preacher is in prayer to God, for himself, for his people—so is his power for real good to men, so is his true fruitfulness, his true fidelity to God, to man, for time, for eternity.

It is impossible for the preacher to keep his spirit in harmony with the divine nature of his high calling without much prayer. [To think] that the preacher, by dint of duty and laborious fidelity to the work and routine of the ministry, can keep himself in trim and fitness, is a serious mistake. Even sermon-making, incessant and taxing as an art, as a duty, as a work, or as a pleasure, will engross and harden, will estrange the heart, by neglect of prayer, from God. The scientist loses God in nature. The preacher may lose God in his sermon.

Prayer freshens the heart of the preacher, keeps it in tune with God and in sympathy with the people, lifts his ministry out of the chilly air of a profession, fructifies routine, and moves every wheel with the facility and power of a divine unction.

Mr. Spurgeon says:

Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, else he were disqualified for the office he has undertaken. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only will *you* need to be pitied, but your people also, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven's gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory.

The praying which makes a prayerful ministry is not a little praying—put in as we put flavor, to give it a pleasant smack—but the praying must be in the body, and form the blood and bones. Prayer is no petty duty, put into a corner;

no piecemeal performance made out of the fragments of time which have been snatched from business and other engagements of life; but it means that the best of our time, the *heart* of our time and strength must be given. It does not mean the closet [being] absorbed in the study or swallowed up in the activities of ministerial duties; but it means the closet first, the study and activities second, both study and activities freshened and made efficient by the closet. Prayer that affects one's ministry must give tone to one's life. The praying which gives color and bent to character is no pleasant, hurried pastime. It must enter as strongly into the heart and life as Christ's "strong crying and tears" did; must draw out the soul into an agony of desire as Paul's did; must be an inwrought fire and force like the "effectual, fervent prayer" of James; must be of that quality which, when put into the golden censer [liturgical incense burner] and incensed before God, works mighty spiritual throes and revolutions.

Prayer is not a little habit pinned on to us while we were tied to our mother's apron strings; neither is it a little decent quarter of a minute's grace said over an hour's dinner, but it is a most serious work of our most serious years. It engages more of time and appetite than our longest dinings or richest feasts. The prayer that makes much of our preaching must be made much of. The character of our praying will determine the character of our preaching. Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick. In every ministry [that is] weighty for good, prayer has always been a serious business.

The preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer. His heart must graduate in the school of prayer. In the school of prayer, only, can the heart learn to preach. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no gifts will supply its lack.

Talking to *men for God* is a great thing, but talking to *God for men* is greater still. He will never talk well and with real success to men for God who has not learned well how to talk to God for men. More than this, prayerless words—in the pulpit and out of it—are deadening words.



CHAPTER 5

Prayer, the Great Essential

You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it.

—Sir Thomas Buxton



Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to a minister.

Pray, then, my dear brother: pray, pray, pray.

—Edward Payson



Prayer, in the preacher's life, in the preacher's study, in the preacher's pulpit, must be a conspicuous and an all-impregnating force, and an all-coloring ingredient. It must play no secondary part, be no mere coating. To him it is given to be with his Lord "all night in prayer." The preacher, to train himself in self-denying prayer, is charged to look to his Master, who, "rising up a great while before day, went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." The preacher's study ought to be a closet, a Bethel, an altar, a vision, and a ladder, that every thought might ascend heavenward ere it went manward; that every part of the sermon might be scented by the air of Heaven and made serious, because God was in the study.

As the [steam] engine never moves until the fire is kindled, so preaching, with all its machinery, perfection, and polish, is at a dead standstill, as far as spiritual results are concerned, till prayer has kindled and created the steam.

The texture, fineness, and strength of the sermon is as so much rubbish unless the mighty impulse of prayer is in it, through it, and behind it. The preacher must, by prayer, put God in the sermon. The preacher must, by prayer, move God toward the people, before he can move the people to God by his words. The preacher must have had audience and ready access to God before he can have access to the people. An open way to God for the preacher is the surest pledge of an open way to the people.

It is necessary to iterate and reiterate that prayer, as a mere habit, as a performance gone through by routine or in a professional way, is a dead and rotten thing. Such praying has no connection with the praying for which we plead. We are stressing true praying, which engages and sets on fire every high element of the preacher's being—prayer which is born of vital oneness with Christ and the fullness of the Holy Ghost, which springs from the deep, overflowing fountains of tender compassion, deathless solicitude for man's eternal good; a consuming zeal for the glory of God; a thorough conviction of the preacher's difficult and delicate work and of the imperative need of God's mightiest help. Praying grounded on these solemn and profound convictions is the only true praying. Preaching backed by such praying is the only preaching which sows the seeds of eternal life in human hearts and builds men up for Heaven.

It is true that there may be popular preaching, pleasant preaching, taking preaching, preaching of much intellectual, literary, and brainy force, with its measure and form of good—with little or no praying; but the preaching which secures God's end in preaching must be born of prayer from text to exordium [beginning of a speech], delivered with the energy and spirit of prayer, followed and made to germinate, and kept in vital force in the hearts of the hearers by the preacher's prayers, long after the occasion has past.

We may excuse the spiritual poverty of our preaching in many ways, but the true secret will be found in the lack of urgent prayer for God's presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are preachers innumerable who can deliver masterful sermons after their order; but the effects are short-lived and do not enter as a factor at all into the regions of the spirit where the fearful war between God and Satan, Heaven and Hell, is being waged, because they are not made powerfully militant and spiritually victorious by prayer.

The preachers who gain mighty results for God are the men who have prevailed in their pleadings with God ere venturing to plead with men. The preachers who are the mightiest in their closets with God are the mightiest in their pulpits with men.

Preachers are human folks, and are exposed to and often caught by the strong driftings of human currents. Praying is spiritual work; and human nature does not like taxing, spiritual work. Human nature wants to sail to Heaven under a favoring breeze, a full, smooth sea. Prayer is humbling work. It abases intellect and pride, crucifies vainglory, and signs our spiritual bankruptcy, and all these are hard for flesh and blood to bear. It is easier not to pray than to bear them. So we come to one of the crying evils of these times, maybe of all times—little or no praying. Of these two evils, perhaps little praying is worse than no praying. Little praying is a kind of make-believe, a salvo for the conscience, a farce and a delusion.

The little estimate we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it. The time given to prayer by the average preacher scarcely counts in the sum of the daily aggregate. Not infrequently the preacher's only praying is by his bedside in his nightdress, ready for bed and soon in it, with, perchance the addition of a few hasty snatches of prayer ere he is dressed in the morning. How feeble, vain, and little is such praying compared with the time and energy devoted to praying by holy men in and out of the Bible! How poor and mean our petty, childish praying is beside the habits of the true men of God in all ages! To men who think praying their main business and devote time to it according to this high estimate of its importance, does God commit the keys of his kingdom, and by them does he work his spiritual wonders in this world. Great praying is the sign and seal of God's great leaders, and the earnest [advance deposit] of the conquering forces with which God will crown their labors.

The preacher is commissioned to pray as well as to preach. His mission is incomplete if he does not do both well. The preacher may speak with all the eloquence of men and of angels; but unless he can pray with a faith which draws all Heaven to his aid, his preaching will be "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" for permanent, God-honoring, soul-saving uses.



CHAPTER 6

A Praying Ministry Successful

The principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write or read or converse or hear with a ready heart; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is, the more my carnal heart is apt to start from it. Prayer and patience and faith are never disappointed. I have long since learned that if ever I was to be a minister, faith and prayer must make me one. When I can find my heart in frame and liberty for prayer, everything else is comparatively easy. —Richard Newton



It may be put down as a spiritual axiom that in every truly successful ministry prayer is an evident and controlling force—evident and controlling in the life of the preacher, evident and controlling in the deep spirituality of his work. A ministry may be a very thoughtful ministry without prayer; the preacher may secure fame and popularity without prayer; the whole machinery of the preacher's life and work may be run without the oil of prayer or with scarcely enough to grease one cog; but no ministry can be a spiritual one, securing holiness in the preacher and in his people, without prayer being made an evident and controlling force.

The preacher that prays indeed puts God into the work. God does not come into the preacher's work as a matter of course or on general principles,

but he comes by prayer and special urgency. That God will be found of us in the day that we seek him with the whole heart, is as true of the preacher as of the penitent. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry that brings the preacher into sympathy with the people. Prayer as essentially unites [the preacher] to the human as it does [unite him] to the divine. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry qualified for the high offices and responsibilities of the preacher. Colleges, learning, books, theology, preaching cannot make a preacher, but praying does. The apostles' commission to preach was a blank till filled up by the Pentecost which praying brought. A prayerful minister has passed beyond the regions of the popular, beyond the man of mere affairs, of secularities, of pulpit attractiveness; passed beyond the ecclesiastical organizer or general, into a sublimer and mightier region, the region of the spiritual. Holiness is the product of his work; transfigured hearts and lives emblazon the reality of his work, its trueness and substantial nature. God is with him. His ministry is not projected on worldly or surface principles. He is deeply stored with and deeply schooled in the things of God. His long, deep communings with God about his people and the agony of his wrestling spirit have crowned him as a prince in the things of God. The iciness of the mere professional has long since melted under the intensity of his praying.

The superficial results of many a ministry, [and] the deadness of others, are to be found in the lack of praying. No ministry can succeed without much praying, and this praying must be fundamental, ever-abiding, ever-increasing. The text, the sermon, should be the result of prayer. The study should be bathed in prayer, all its duties so impregnated with prayer, its whole spirit the spirit of prayer. "I am sorry that I have prayed so little," was the deathbed regret of one of God's chosen ones, a sad and remorseful regret for a preacher. "I want a life of greater, deeper, truer prayer," said the late Archbishop Tait. So may we all say, and this, may we all secure.

God's true preachers have been distinguished by one great feature: they were men of prayer. Differing often in many things, they have always had a common center. They may have started from different points, and traveled by different roads, but they converged to one point: they were one in prayer. God to there was the center of attraction, and prayer was the path that led to God. These men prayed not occasionally, not a little at regular or at odd times; but they so prayed that their prayers entered into and shaped their characters;

they so prayed as to affect their own lives and the lives of others; they so prayed as to make the history of the church and influence the current of the times. They spent much time in prayer, not because they marked the shadow on the dial or the hands on the clock, but because it was to them so momentous and engaging a business that they could scarcely give over.

Prayer was to them what it was to Paul, a striving with earnest effort of soul; what it was to Jacob, a wrestling and prevailing; what it was to Christ, "strong crying and tears." They "prayed always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." "The effectual, fervent prayer" has been the mightiest weapon of God's mightiest soldiers. The statement in regard to Elijah—that he . .

. . . was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

—comprehends [describes] all prophets and preachers who have moved their generation for God, and shows the instrument by which they worked their wonders.



CHAPTER 7

Much Time Should Be Given to Prayer

The great masters and teachers in Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. Not to go beyond the limits of the English church—it is recorded of Bishop Andrews that he spent five hours daily on his knees. The greatest practical resolves that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at in prayer. —Canon Liddon



While many private prayers, in the nature of things, must be short; while public prayers, as a rule, ought to be short and condensed; while there is ample room for and value put on ejaculatory prayer—yet in our private communions with God, time is a feature essential to its value. Much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the mediate [result of intervention] or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the long ones that have preceded them. The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by one who has not prevailed with God in a mightier struggle of long continuance. Jacob's victory of faith could not have been gained without that all-night wrestling. God's acquaintance is not made by pop calls. God does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers. Much with God alone is the secret of knowing him and of influence with him. He yields to the persistency of

a faith that knows him. He bestows his richest gifts upon those who declare their desire for and appreciation of those gifts by the constancy as well as earnestness of their importunity. Christ, who in this as well as other things is our Example, spent many whole nights in prayer. His custom was to pray much. He had his habitual place to pray. Many long seasons of praying make up his history and character. Paul prayed day and night. It took time from very important interests for Daniel to pray three times a day. David's morning, noon, and night praying were doubtless on many occasions very protracted. While we have no specific account of the time these Bible saints spent in prayer, yet the indications are that they consumed much time in prayer, and on some occasions long seasons of praying was their custom.

We would not have any think that the value of their prayers is to be measured by the clock, but our purpose is to impress on our minds the necessity of being much alone with God; and that if this feature has not been produced by our faith, then our faith is of a feeble and surface type.

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "he thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat," he said, "without lifting my heart to God." his greeting to a friend was always: "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." he had a motto: "he that has prayed well, has studied well."

Archbishop Leighton was so much alone with God that he seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. "Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure," says his biographer. Bishop Ken was so much with God that his soul was said to be God-enamored. He was with God before the clock struck three every morning. Bishop Asbury said: "I propose to rise at four o'clock as often as I can and

spend two hours in prayer and meditation." Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o'clock for his business of praying till eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim: "O how this shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?" he who has learned this trade well draws at will, on sight, and with acceptance, of heaven's unfailing bank.

One of the holiest and among the most gifted of Scotch preachers says:

I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted, and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession.

This was the praying plan of Robert McCheyne. The memorable Methodist band, in their praying, shame us. "From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer."

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher, thought the day ill spent if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid [blanket] that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground, weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!"



CHAPTER 8

Examples of Praying Men

The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties. The great mass of worldly men and of learned men are absolutely incapable of prayer.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge



Bishop Wilson says: "In H. Martyn's journal, [I found] the spirit of prayer, the time he devoted to the duty, and

his fervor in it, are the first things which strike me."

Payson wore the hardwood boards into grooves where his knees pressed so often and so long. His biographer says:

his continuing instant [urgent] in prayer, be his circumstances what they might, is the most noticeable fact in his history, and points out the duty of all who would rival his eminency. To his ardent and persevering prayers must, no doubt, be ascribed in a great measure his distinguished and almost uninterrupted success.

The Marquis DeRenty, to whom Christ was most precious, ordered his servant to call him from his devotions at the end of half an hour. The servant at the time saw his face through an aperture. It was marked with such holiness

that he hated to arouse him. His lips were moving, but he was perfectly silent. He waited until three half hours had passed; then he called to him—[where-upon,] when he arose from his knees, saying that the half hour was so short when he was communing with Christ.

Brainerd said: "I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer."

William Bramwell is famous in Methodist annals for personal holiness and for his wonderful success in preaching and for the marvelous answers to his prayers. For hours at a time he would pray. He almost lived on his knees. He went over his [ministry] circuits like a flame of fire. The fire was kindled by the time he spent in prayer. He often spent as much as four hours in a single season of prayer in retirement.

Bishop Andrewes spent the greatest part of five hours every day in prayer and devotion.

Sir Henry Havelock always spent the first two hours of each day alone with God. If the encampment was struck at 6 AM, he would rise at four.

Earl Cairns rose daily at six o'clock to secure an hour and a half for the study of the Bible and for prayer, before conducting family worship at a quarter to eight.

Dr. Judson's success in prayer is attributable to the fact that he gave much time to prayer. He says on this point:

Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two or three hours every day, not merely to devotional exercises, but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God. Endeavor seven times a day to withdraw from business and company and lift up thy soul to God in private retirement. Begin the day by rising after midnight and devoting some time amid the silence and darkness of the night to this sacred work. Let the hour of opening dawn find thee at the same work. Let the hours of nine, twelve, three, six, and nine at night witness the same. Be resolute in His cause. Make all practicable sacrifices to maintain it. Consider that thy time is short, and that business and company must not be allowed to rob thee of thy God.

Impossible, say we, fanatical directions! Dr. Judson impressed an empire for Christ and laid the foundations of God's kingdom with imperishable granite in the heart of Burma. He was successful, one of the few men who mightily impressed the world for Christ. Many men of greater gifts and genius and learning

than he have made no such impression; their religious work is like footsteps in the sands, but he has engraven his work on the adamant [unyielding]. The secret of its profundity and endurance is found in the fact that he gave time to prayer. He kept the iron red-hot with prayer, and God's skill fashioned it with enduring power. No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer, and no man can be a man of prayer who does not give much time to praying.

Is it true that prayer is simply the compliance with habit, dull and mechanical? A petty performance into which we are trained till tameness, shortness, [and] superficiality are its chief elements? "Is it true that prayer is, as is assumed, little else than the half-passive play of sentiment which flows languidly on through the minutes or hours of easy reverie?" Canon Liddon continues:

Let those who have really prayed give the answer. They sometimes describe prayer, with the patriarch Jacob, as a wrestling together with an Unseen Power which may last, not unfrequently in an earnest life, late into the night hours, or even to the break of day. Sometimes they refer to common intercession with St. Paul as a concerted struggle. They have, when praying, their eyes fixed on the Great Intercessor in Gethsemane, upon the drops of blood which fall to the ground in that agony of resignation and sacrifice. Importunity is of the essence of successful prayer. Importunity [troublesome urgency] means not dreaminess, but sustained work. It is through prayer especially that the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. It was a saying of the late Bishop Hamilton that "No man is likely to do much good in prayer, who does not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work to be prepared for, and persevered in, with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which are, in our opinion, at once most interesting and most necessary."



CHAPTER 9

Begin the Day with Prayer

I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: "Early will I seek thee"; "Thou shalt early hear my voice." Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then, when in secret prayer, the soul is often out of tune, I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see his face first, to get my soul near him, before it is near another.

—Robert Murray McCheyne



The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be in the last place the remainder of the day.

Behind this early rising and early praying is the ardent desire which presses us into this pursuit after God. Morning listlessness is the index to a listless heart. The heart which is behindhand in seeking God, in the morning has lost its relish for God. David's heart was ardent after God. He hungered and thirsted after God, and so he sought God early, before daylight. The bed and

sleep could not chain his soul in its eagerness after God. Christ longed for communion with God; and so, rising a great while before day, he would go out into the mountain to pray. The disciples, when fully awake and ashamed of their indulgence, would know where to find him. We might go through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.

A desire for God which cannot break the chains of sleep, is a weak thing and will do but little good for God after it has indulged itself fully. The desire for God that keeps so far behind the devil and the world at the beginning of the day, will never catch up.

It is not simply the getting up that puts men to the front and makes them captain generals in God's hosts, but it is the ardent desire which stirs and breaks all self-indulgent chains. But the getting up gives vent, increase, and strength to the desire. If they had lain in bed and indulged themselves, the desire would have been quenched. The desire aroused them and put them on the stretch for God, and this heeding and acting on the call gave their faith its grasp on God and gave to their hearts the sweetest and fullest revelation of God, and this strength of faith and fullness of revelation made them saints by eminence, and the halo of their sainthood has come down to us, and we have entered on the enjoyment of their conquests. But we take our fill in enjoyment, and not in productions. We build their tombs and write their epitaphs, but are careful not to follow their examples.

We need a generation of preachers who seek God and seek him early, who give the freshness and dew of effort to God, and secure, in return, the freshness and fullness of his power, that he may be as the dew to them, full of gladness and strength, through all the heat and labor of the day. Our laziness after God is our crying sin. The children of this world are far wiser than we. They are at it early and late. We do not seek God with ardor and diligence. No man gets God who does not follow hard after him, and no soul follows hard after God who is not after him in early morn.



CHAPTER 10

Prayer and Devotion United

There is a manifest want of spiritual influence on the ministry of the present day. I feel it in my own case and I see it in that of others. I am afraid there is too much of a low, managing, contriving, maneuvering temper of mind among us. We are laying ourselves out more than is expedient to meet one man's taste and another man's prejudices. The ministry is a grand and holy affair, and it should find in us a simple habit of spirit, and a holy but humble indifference to all consequences. The leading defect in Christian ministers is want of a devotional habit.

—Richard Cecil



Never was there greater need for saintly men and women; more imperative still is the call for saintly, God-devoted preachers. The world moves with gigantic strides. Satan has his hold and rule on the world, and labors to make all its movements subserve his ends. Religion must do its best work, present its most attractive and perfect models. By every means, modern sainthood must be inspired by the loftiest ideals and by the largest possibilities through the Spirit. Paul lived on his knees, that the Ephesian church might measure the heights, breadths, and depths of an unmeasurable saintliness, and “be filled with all the fullness of God.” Epaphras laid himself out with the exhaustive toil and strenuous conflict of fervent prayer, that the Colossian church might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Everywhere, everything in

apostolic times was on the stretch, that the people of God might each and "all, come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." No premium was given to dwarfs; no encouragement to an old babyhood. The babies were to grow; the old, instead of feebleness and infirmities, were to bear fruit in old age, and be fat and flourishing. The divinest thing in religion is holy men and holy women.

No amount of money, genius, or culture can move things for God. Holiness energizing the soul, the whole man aflame with love, with desire for more faith, more prayer, more zeal, more consecration—this is the secret of power. These we need and must have, and men must be the incarnation of this God-inflamed devotedness. God's advance has been stayed, his cause crippled: his name dishonored for their lack. Genius (though the loftiest and most gifted), education (though the most learned and refined), position, dignity, place, honored names, high ecclesiastics—cannot move this chariot of our God. It is a fiery one, and fiery forces only can move it. The genius of a Milton fails. The imperial strength of a Leo fails. Brainerd's spirit can move it. Brainerd's spirit was on fire for God, on fire for souls. Nothing earthly, worldly, selfish came in to abate in the least the intensity of this all-impelling and all-consuming force and flame.

Prayer is the creator as well as the channel of devotion. The spirit of devotion is the spirit of prayer. Prayer and devotion are united as soul and body are united, as life and the heart are united. There is no real prayer without devotion, no devotion without prayer. The preacher must be surrendered to God in the holiest devotion. He is not a professional man, his ministry is not a profession; it is a divine institution, a divine devotion. He is devoted to God. His aim, aspirations, ambition are *for* God and *to* God, and to such, prayer is as essential as food is to life.

The preacher, above everything else, must be devoted to God. The preacher's relations to God are the insignia and credentials of his ministry. These must be clear, conclusive, unmistakable. No common, surface type of piety must be his. If he does not excel in grace, he does not excel at all. If he does not preach by life, character, conduct—he does not preach at all. If his piety be light, his preaching may be as soft and as sweet as music, as gifted as Apollo, yet its weight will be a feather's weight, visionary [like a vision],

fleeting as the morning cloud or the early dew. Devotion to God—there is no substitute for this in the preacher's character and conduct. Devotion to a church, to opinions, to an organization, to orthodoxy—these are paltry, misleading, and vain when they become the source of inspiration, the animus [attitude] of a call. God must be the mainspring of the preacher's effort, the fountain and crown of all his toil. The name and honor of Jesus Christ, the advance of his cause, must be all in all. The preacher must have no inspiration but the name of Jesus Christ, no ambition but to have him glorified, no toil but for him. Then prayer will be a source of his illuminations, the means of perpetual advance, the gauge of his success. The perpetual aim, the only ambition the preacher can cherish is to have God with him.

Never did the cause of God need perfect illustrations of the possibilities of prayer more than in this age. No age, no person, will be ensamples of the gospel power except the ages or persons of deep and earnest prayer. A prayerless age will have but scant models of divine power. Prayerless hearts will never rise to these Alpine heights. The age may be a better age than the past, but there is an infinite distance between the betterment of an age by the force of an advancing civilization, and its betterment by the increase of holiness and Christlikeness by the energy of prayer. The Jews were much better when Christ came than in the ages before. It was the golden age of their Pharisaic religion. Their golden religious age crucified Christ. [There was] never more praying, never less praying; never more sacrifices, never less sacrifice; never less idolatry, never more idolatry; never more of temple worship, never less of God worship; never more of lip service, never less of heart service (God worshiped by lips whose hearts and hands crucified God's Son!); never more of churchgoers, never less of saints.

It is prayer-force which makes saints. Holy characters are formed by the power of real praying. The more of true saints, the more of praying; the more of praying, the more of true saints.



CHAPTER II

An Example of Devotion

I urge upon you communion with Christ—a growing communion. There are curtains to be drawn aside in Christ that we never saw, and new foldings of love in him. I despair that I shall ever win to the far end of that love, there are so many plies [layers] in it. Therefore dig deep, and sweat and labor and take pains for him, and set by as much time in the day for him as you can. We will be won in the labor.

—Samuel Rutherford



God has now, and has had, many of these devoted, prayerful preachers—men in whose lives prayer has been a mighty, controlling, conspicuous force. The world has felt their power, God has felt and honored their power, God's cause has moved mightily and swiftly by their prayers, holiness has shone out in their characters with a divine effulgence [brilliant radiance].

God found one of the men he was looking for in David Brainerd¹, whose work and name have gone into history. He was no ordinary man, but was capable of shining in any company, the peer of the wise and gifted ones, eminently suited to fill the most attractive pulpits and to labor among the most

¹ David Brainerd (1718–1747). Missionary to Native Americans in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 29. Jonathan Edwards, later president of Yale University, edited and published a famous edition of Brainerd's diary and some of his other writings.

refined and the cultured, who were so anxious to secure him for their pastor. President Edwards bears testimony that he was,

a young man of distinguished talents, had extraordinary knowledge of men and things, had rare conversational powers, excelled in his knowledge of theology, and was truly, for one so young, an extraordinary divine, and especially in all matters relating to experimental religion. I never knew his equal of his age and standing for clear and accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion. His manner in prayer was almost inimitable, such as I have very rarely known equaled. His learning was very considerable, and he had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit.

No sublimer story has been recorded in earthly annals than that of David Brainerd; no miracle attests with diviner force the truth of Christianity than the life and work of such a man. Alone in the savage wilds of America, struggling day and night with a mortal disease, unschooled in the care of souls, having access to the Indians for a large portion of time only through the bungling medium of a pagan interpreter—with the Word of God in his heart and in his hand, his soul fired with the divine flame, [and] a place and time to pour out his soul to God in prayer, he fully established the worship of God and secured all its gracious results. The Indians were changed with a great change—from the lowest besotments of an ignorant and debased heathenism—to pure, devout, intelligent Christians; all vice reformed, the external duties of Christianity at once embraced and acted on; family prayer set up; the Sabbath instituted and religiously observed; the internal graces of religion exhibited with growing sweetness and strength. The solution of these results is found in David Brainerd himself, not in the conditions or accidents, but in the man Brainerd. He was God's man, for God first, and last and all the time. God could flow unhindered through him. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straitened by the conditions of his heart; the whole channel was broadened and cleaned out for God's fullest and most powerful passage, so that God with all his mighty forces could come down on the hopeless, savage wilderness, and transform it into his blooming and fruitful garden; for nothing is too hard for God to do if he can get the right kind of a man to do it with.

Brainerd lived the life of holiness and prayer. His diary is full and monotonous with the record of his seasons of fasting, meditation, and retirement.

The time he spent in private prayer amounted to many hours daily. "When I return home," he said, "and give myself to meditation, prayer, and fasting, my soul longs for mortification, self-denial, humility, and divorcement from all things of the world." "I have nothing to do," he said, "with earth but only to labor in it honestly for God. I do not desire to live one minute for anything which earth can afford." After this high order did he pray:

Feeling somewhat of the sweetness of communion with God and the constraining force of his love, and how admirably it captivates the soul and makes all the desires and affections to center in God, I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work which I have in view of preaching the gospel, and that the Lord would return to me and show me the light of his countenance. I had little life and power in the forenoon. Near the middle of the afternoon, God enabled me to wrestle ardently in intercession for my absent friends, but just at night[fall] the Lord visited me marvelously in prayer. I think my soul was never in such agony before. I felt no restraint, for the treasures of divine grace were opened to me. I wrestled for absent friends, for the ingathering of souls, for multitudes of poor souls, and for many that I thought were the children of God, personally, in many distant places. I was in such agony from sun half an hour high till near dark, that I was all over wet with sweat, but yet it seemed to me I had done nothing. O, my dear Savior did sweat blood for poor souls! I longed for more compassion toward them. I felt still in a sweet frame, under a sense of divine love and grace, and went to bed in such a frame, with my heart set on God.

It was prayer which gave to his life and ministry their marvelous power.

The men of mighty prayer are men of spiritual might. Prayers never die. Brainerd's whole life was a life of prayer. By day and by night, he prayed. Before preaching and after preaching, he prayed. Riding through the interminable solitudes of the forests, he prayed. On his bed of straw, he prayed. Retiring to the dense and lonely forests, he prayed. Hour by hour, day after day, early morn and late at night, he was praying and fasting, pouring out his soul, interceding, communing with God. He was with God mightily in prayer, and God was with him mightily, and by it, he, being dead, yet [still] speaketh and worketh, and will speak and work till the end comes, and among the glorious ones of that glorious day, he will be with the first.

Jonathan Edwards says of him:

his life shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry. He sought it as the soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor? Always fervently. Not only in word and doctrine, in public and in private, but in prayers by day and night, wrestling with God in secret and travailing in birth with unutterable groans and agonies, until Christ was formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent. Like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day!



CHAPTER 12

Heart Preparation Necessary

For nothing reaches the heart but what is from the heart or pierces the conscience but what comes from a living conscience.

—William Penn



In the morning, was more engaged in preparing the head than the heart. This has been frequently my error, and I have always felt the evil of it especially in prayer. Reform it then, O Lord! Enlarge my heart and I shall preach.

—Robert Murray McChesney



A sermon that has more head infused into it than heart will not borne home with efficacy to the hearers.

—Richard Cecil



Prayer, with its manifold and many-sided forces, helps the mouth to utter the truth in its fullness and freedom. The preacher is to be prayed for, the preacher is made by prayer. The preacher's mouth is to be prayed for; his mouth is to be opened and filled by prayer. A holy mouth is made by praying, by much praying; a brave mouth is made by praying, by much praying. The church and the world, God and Heaven, owe much to Paul's mouth; Paul's mouth owed its power to prayer.

How manifold, illimitable, valuable, and helpful prayer is to the preacher in so many ways, at so many points, in every way! One great value is, it helps his heart.

Praying makes the preacher [into] a heart preacher. Prayer puts the preacher's heart into the preacher's sermon; prayer puts the preacher's sermon into the preacher's heart.

The heart makes the preacher. Men of great hearts are great preachers. Men of bad hearts may do a measure of good, but this is rare. The hireling and the stranger may help the sheep at some points, but it is the good shepherd with the good shepherd's heart who will bless the sheep and answer the full measure of the shepherd's place.

We have emphasized sermon-preparation until we have lost sight of the important thing to be prepared—the heart. A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon.

Volumes have been written laying down the mechanics and taste of sermon-making, until we have become possessed with the idea that this scaffolding is the building. The young preacher has been taught to lay out all his strength on the form, taste, and beauty of his sermon as a mechanical and intellectual product. We have thereby cultivated a vicious taste among the people, and raised the clamor for talent instead of grace, eloquence instead of piety, rhetoric instead of revelation, reputation and brilliancy instead of holiness. By it we have lost the true idea of preaching, lost preaching power, lost pungent conviction for sin, lost the rich experience and elevated Christian character, lost the authority over consciences and lives which always results from genuine preaching.

It would not do to say that preachers study too much. Some of them do not study at all; others do not study enough. Numbers do not study the right way to show themselves workmen approved of God. But our great lack is not in head culture, but in heart culture; not lack of knowledge but lack of holiness is, our sad and telling defect—not that we know too much, but that we do not meditate on God and his word and watch and fast and pray enough. The heart is the great hindrance to our preaching. Words pregnant with divine truth find in our hearts nonconductors; arrested, they fall shorn and powerless.

Can ambition, that lusts after praise and place, preach the gospel of him who made himself of no reputation and took on him the form of a servant? Can the

proud, the vain, the egotistical preach the gospel of him who was meek and lowly? Can the bad-tempered, passionate, selfish, hard, worldly man preach the system which teems with long-suffering, self-denial, tenderness, which imperatively demands separation from enmity and crucifixion to the world? Can the hireling official—heartless, perfunctory—preach the gospel which demands the shepherd to give his life for the sheep? Can the covetous man, who counts salary and money, preach the gospel, till he has gleaned his heart and can say in the spirit of Christ and Paul, in the words of Wesley: "I count it dung and dross; I trample it under my feet; I (yet not I, but the grace of God in me) esteem it just as the mire of the streets, I desire it not, I seek it not?" God's revelation does not need the light of human genius, the polish and strength of human culture, the brilliancy of human thought, the force of human brains to adorn or enforce it; but it does demand the simplicity, the docility, humility, and faith of a child's heart.

It was this surrender and subordination of intellect and genius to the divine and spiritual forces which made Paul peerless among the apostles. It was this which gave Wesley his power and radicated his labors in the history of humanity. This gave to Loyola the strength to arrest the retreating forces of Catholicism.

Our great need is heart-preparation. Luther held it as an axiom: "he who has prayed well, has studied well." We do not say that men are not to think and use their intellects; but he will use his intellect best who cultivates his heart most. We do not say that preachers should not be students; but we do say that their great study should be the Bible, and he studies the Bible best who has kept his heart with diligence. We do not say that the preacher should not know men, but he will be the greater adept in human nature, who has fathomed the depths and intricacies of his own heart. We do say that while the channel of preaching is the mind, its fountain is the heart; you may broaden and deepen the channel, but if you do not look well to the purity and depth of the fountain, you will have a dry or polluted channel. We do say that almost any man of common intelligence has sense enough to preach the gospel, but very few have grace enough to do so. We do say that he who has struggled with his own heart and conquered it; who has taught it humility, faith, love, truth, mercy, sympathy, courage; who can pour the rich treasures of the heart thus trained, through a manly intellect, all surcharged with the power of the gospel on the consciences of his hearers—such a one will be the truest, most successful preacher in the esteem of his Lord.



CHAPTER 13

Grace from the Heart Rather than the Head

Study not to be a fine preacher. Jerichos are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply unto Jesus for preaching food; and what is wanted, will be given, and what is given, will be blessed, whether it be a barley grain or a wheaten loaf, a crust or a crumb. Your mouth will be a flowing stream or a fountain sealed, according as your heart is. Avoid all controversy in preaching, talking, or writing; preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Jesus Christ. —Berridge



The heart is the Savior of the world. Heads do not save. Genius, brains, brilliancy, strength, natural gifts do not save. The gospel flows through hearts. All the mightiest forces are heart forces. All the sweetest and loveliest graces are heart graces. Great hearts make great characters; great hearts make divine characters. God is love. There is nothing greater than love, nothing greater than God. Hearts make Heaven; Heaven is love. There is nothing higher, nothing sweeter, than Heaven. It is the heart and not the head which makes God's great preachers. The heart counts much [in] every way in religion. The heart must speak from the pulpit. The heart must hear in the pew. In fact, we serve God with our hearts. Head homage does not pass current in Heaven.

We believe that one of the serious and most popular errors of the modern pulpit is the putting of more thought than prayer, of more head than of heart in

its sermons. Big hearts make big preachers; good hearts make good preachers. A theological school to enlarge and cultivate the heart is the golden desideratum [objective] of the gospel. The pastor binds his people to him and rules his people by his heart. They may admire his gifts, they may be proud of his ability, they may be affected for the time by his sermons; but the stronghold of his power is his heart. His scepter is love. The throne of his power is his heart.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Heads never make martyrs. It is the heart which surrenders the life to love and fidelity. It takes great courage to be a faithful pastor, but the heart alone can supply this courage. Gifts and genius may be brave, but it is the gifts and genius of the heart and not of the head.

It is easier to fill the head than it is to prepare the heart. It is easier to make a brain sermon than a heart sermon. It was heart that drew the Son of God from Heaven. It is heart that will draw men to Heaven. Men of heart is what the world needs to sympathize with its woe, to kiss away its sorrows, to compassionate its misery, and to alleviate its pain. Christ was eminently the man of sorrows, because he was preeminently the man of heart.

"Give me thy heart," is God's requisition of men. "Give me thy heart!" is man's demand of man.

A professional ministry is a heartless ministry. When salary plays a great part in the ministry, the heart plays little part. We may make preaching our business, and not put our hearts in the business. He who puts self to the front in his preaching, puts heart to the rear. He who does not sow with his heart in his study will never reap a harvest for God. The closet is the heart's study. We will learn more about how to preach and what to preach there than we can learn in our libraries. "Jesus wept" is the shortest and biggest verse in the Bible. It is he who goes forth weeping (not preaching great sermons), bearing precious seed, who shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Praying gives sense, brings wisdom, broadens and strengthens the mind. The closet is a perfect schoolteacher and schoolhouse for the preacher. Thought is not only brightened and clarified in prayer, but thought is born in prayer. We can learn more in an hour praying, when praying indeed, than from many hours in the study. Books are in the closet which can be found and read nowhere else. Revelations are made in the closet which are made nowhere else.



CHAPTER 14

Unction a Necessity

One bright benison which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something—an unction from the Holy One . . . If the anointing which we bear comes not from the Lord of hosts, we are deceivers, since only in prayer can we obtain it. Let us continue instant [urgent], constant, fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the thrashing floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of Heaven.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon



Alexander Knox, a Christian philosopher of the days of Wesley, not an adherent but a strong personal friend of Wesley, and with much spiritual sympathy with the Wesleyan movement, writes:

It is strange and lamentable, but I verily believe the fact to be that, except among Methodists and Methodistical clergyman, there is not much interesting preaching in England. The clergy, too generally have absolutely lost the art. There is, I conceive, in the great laws of the moral world, a kind of secret understanding like the affinities in chemistry, between rightly promulgated religious truth and the deepest feelings of the human mind. Where the one is duly exhibited, the other will respond. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" — but to this devout feeling is indispensable in the speaker. Now, I am obliged to state from my own observation that this *unction*, as the French not unfitly term it, is beyond all comparison more

likely to be found in England in a Methodist conventicle than in a parish [Anglican] church. This, and this alone, seems really to be that which fills the Methodist houses and thins the churches. I am, I verily think, no enthusiast [emotional ranter]; I am a most sincere and cordial churchman, a humble disciple of the school of Hale and Boyle, of Burnet and Leighton. Now I must aver that, when I was in this country two years ago, I did not hear a single preacher who taught me like my own great masters, but such as are deemed Methodistical. And I now despair of getting an atom of heart instruction from any other quarter. The Methodist preachers (however I may not always approve of all their expressions) do most assuredly diffuse this true religion and undefiled. I felt real pleasure last Sunday. I can bear witness that the preacher did at once speak the words of truth and soberness. There was no eloquence—the honest man never dreamed of such a thing—but there was far better: a cordial communication of *vitalized truth*. I say vitalized, because what he declared to others it was impossible not to feel he lived on himself.

This unction is the art of preaching. The preacher who never had this unction never had the art of preaching. The preacher who has lost this unction has lost the art of preaching. Whatever other arts he may have and retain—the art of sermon-making, the art of eloquence, the art of great, clear thinking, the art of pleasing an audience—he has lost the divine art of preaching. This unction makes God's truth powerful and interesting, draws and attracts, edifies, convicts, saves.

This unction vitalizes God's revealed truth, makes it living and life-giving. Even God's truth spoken without this unction is light, dead, and deadening. Though abounding in truth, though weighty with thought, though sparkling with rhetoric, though pointed by logic, though powerful by earnestness—without this divine unction, it issues in [deals in] death and not in life. Mr. Spurgeon says:

I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into word what is meant by preaching with unction. Yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence. Samaria in famine, typifies a discourse without it. Jerusalem with her feast of fat things, full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Everyone knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it of itself? Such is the mystery of

spiritual anointing. We know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish, to counterfeit it. Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless. Yet it is, in itself, priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Christ.



CHAPTER 15

Unction, the Mark of True Gospel Preaching

Speak for eternity. Above all things, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. Remember that God, and not man, must have the glory. If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we would find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children?

—Robert Murray McCheyne



Unction is that indefinable, indescribable something which an old, renowned Scotch preacher describes thus:

There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh—but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections, and comes immediately from the Word; but if there be any way to obtain such a thing, it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker.

We call it unction. It is this unction which makes the word of God . . .

quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is this unction which gives the words of the preacher such point, sharpness, and power, and which creates such friction and stir in many a dead congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, smooth as human oil could make them; but [produce] no signs of life, not a pulse throb; all as peaceful as the grave and as dead. The same preacher in the meanwhile receives a baptism of this unction, the divine *inflatus* is on him, the letter of the Word has been embellished and fired by this mysterious power, and the throbbings of life begin—life which receives or life which resists. The unction pervades and convicts the conscience and breaks the heart.

This divine unction is the feature which separates and distinguishes true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting the truth, and which creates a wide spiritual chasm between the preacher who has it and the one who has it not. It backs and impregns revealed truth with all the energy of God. Unction is simply putting God in his own word, and on his own preachers. By mighty and great prayerfulness and by continual prayerfulness, it is all potential and personal to the preacher; it inspires and clarifies his intellect, gives insight and grasp and projecting power; it gives to the preacher heart power, which is greater than head power; and tenderness, purity, force flow from the heart by it. Enlargement, freedom, fullness of thought, directness, and simplicity of utterance are the fruits of this unction.

Often earnestness is mistaken for this unction. He who has the divine unction will be earnest in the very spiritual nature of things, but there may be a vast deal of earnestness without the least mixture of unction.

Earnestness and unction look alike from some points of view. Earnestness may be readily and without detection substituted or mistaken for unction. It requires a spiritual eye and a spiritual taste to discriminate.

Earnestness may be sincere, serious, ardent, and persevering. It goes at a thing with good will, pursues it with perseverance, and urges it with ardor; puts force in it. But all these forces do not rise higher than the mere human. The man is in it—the whole man, with all that he has of will and heart, of brain and genius, of planning and working and talking. He has set himself to some purpose which has mastered him, and he pursues to master it. There may be none of God in it. There may be little of God in it, [simply] because there is so much of the man in it. He may present pleas in advocacy of his earnest purpose which please or touch and move or overwhelm with conviction

of their importance; and in all this earnestness may move along earthly ways, being propelled by human forces only, its altar made by earthly hands and its fire kindled by earthly flames. It is said of a rather famous preacher of [about] gifts, whose construction of Scripture was to his fancy or purpose, that he "grew very eloquent over his own exegesis." So men grow exceeding earnest over their own plans or movements. Earnestness may be selfishness simulated.

What of unction? It is the indefinable in preaching which makes it preaching. It is that which distinguishes and separates preaching from all mere human addresses. It is the divine in preaching. It makes the preaching sharp to those who need sharpness. It distills as the dew to those who need to be refreshed. It is well described as:

*A two-edged sword
Of heavenly temper keen,
And double were the wounds it made
Wherever it glanced between.*

*'Twas death to sin; 'twas life
To all who mourned for sin.
It kindled and it silenced strife,
Made war and peace within.*

This unction comes to the preacher not in the study but in the closet. It is heaven's distillation in answer to prayer. It is the sweetest exhalation of the Holy Spirit. It impregnates, suffuses, softens, percolates, cuts, and soothes. It carries the Word like dynamite, like salt, like sugar; makes the Word a soother, an arranger, a revealer, a searcher; makes the hearer a culprit or a saint, makes him weep like a child and live like a giant; opens his heart and his purse as gently, yet as strongly as the spring opens the leaves. This unction is not the gift of genius. It is not found in the halls of learning. No eloquence can woo it. No industry can win it. No prelatical hands can confer it. It is the gift of God—the signet set to his own messengers. It is heaven's knighthood given to the chosen true and brave ones who have sought this anointed honor through many an hour of tearful, wrestling prayer.

Earnestness is good and impressive: genius is gifted and great. Thought kindles and inspires, but it takes a diviner endowment, a more powerful

energy than earnestness or genius or thought to break the chains of sin, to win estranged and depraved hearts to God, to repair the breaches and restore the church to her old ways of purity and power. Nothing but this holy unction can do this.



CHAPTER 16

Much Prayer the Price of Unction

All the minister's efforts will be vanity or worse than vanity if he has not unction. Unction must come down from Heaven and spread a savor and feeling and relish over his ministry; and among the other means of qualifying himself for his office, the Bible must hold the first place, and the last also must be given to the Word of God and prayer.

—Richard Cecil



In the Christian system, unction is the anointing of the Holy Ghost, separating unto God's work and qualifying for it. This unction is the one divine enablement by which the preacher accomplishes the peculiar and saving ends of preaching. Without this unction, there are no true spiritual results accomplished; the results and forces in preaching do not rise above the results of unsanctified speech. Without unction, the former is as potent as the pulpit.

This divine unction on the preacher generates, through the Word of God, the spiritual results that flow from the gospel; and without this unction, these results are not secured. Many pleasant impressions may be made, but these all fall far below the ends of gospel preaching. This unction may be simulated. There are many things that look like it, there are many results that resemble its effects; but they are foreign to its results and to its nature. The fervor or softness excited by a pathetic or emotional sermon may look like the movements

of the divine unction, but they have no pungent, perpetrating heart-breaking force. No heart-healing balm is there in these surface, sympathetic, emotional movements; they are not radical, neither sin-searching nor sin-curing.

This divine unction is the one distinguishing feature that separates true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting truth. It backs and interpenetrates the revealed truth with all the force of God. It illumines the Word and broadens and enriches the intellect and empowers it to grasp and apprehend the Word. It qualifies the preacher's heart, and brings it to that condition of tenderness, of purity, of force and light that are necessary to secure the highest results. This unction gives to the preacher liberty and enlargement of thought and soul—a freedom, fullness, and directness of utterance that can be secured by no other process.

Without this unction on the preacher, the gospel has no more power to propagate itself than any other system of truth. This is the seal of its divinity. Unction in the preacher puts God in the gospel. Without the unction, God is absent, and the gospel is left to the low and unsatisfactory forces that the ingenuity, interest, or talents of men can devise to enforce and project its doctrines.

It is in this element that the pulpit oftener fails than in any other element. Just at this all-important point it lapses. Learning it may have, brilliancy and eloquence may delight and charm, sensation or less offensive methods may bring the populace in crowds, mental power may impress and enforce truth with all its resources; but without this unction, each and all these will be but as the fretful assault of the waters on a Gibraltar. Spray and foam may cover and spangle; but the rocks are there still, unimpressed and unimpressible. The human heart can no more be swept of its hardness and sin by these human forces than these rocks can be swept away by the ocean's ceaseless flow.

This unction is the consecration force, and its presence the continuous test of that consecration. It is this divine anointing on the preacher that secures his consecration to God and his work. Other forces and motives may call him to the work, but this only is consecration. A separation to God's work by the power of the Holy Spirit is the only consecration recognized by God as legitimate.

The unction, the divine unction, this heavenly anointing—is what the pulpit needs, and must have. This divine and heavenly oil, put on it by the

imposition of God's hand, must soften and lubricate the whole man—heart, head, spirit—until it separates him with a mighty separation from all earthly, secular, worldly, selfish motives and aims, separating him to everything that is pure and Godlike.

It is the presence of this unction on the preacher that creates the stir and friction in many a congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, but no ruffle has been seen, no pain or pulsation felt. All is quiet as a graveyard. Another preacher comes, and this mysterious influence is on him; the letter of the Word has been fired by the Spirit, the throes of a mighty movement are felt, it is the unction that pervades and stirs the conscience and breaks the heart. Unctionless preaching makes everything hard, dry, acrid, dead.

This unction is not a memory or an era of the past only; it is a present, realized, conscious fact. It belongs to the experience of the man as well as to his preaching. It is that which transforms him into the image of his divine Master, as well as that by which he declares the truths of Christ with power. It is so much the power in the ministry as to make all else seem feeble and vain without it, and by its presence to atone for the absence of all other and feebler forces.

This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was at first secured; by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, by deeming all else loss and failure without it.

How and whence comes this unction? Direct from God in answer to prayer. Praying hearts only are the hearts filled with this holy oil; praying lips only are anointed with this divine unction.

Prayer, much prayer, is the price of preaching unction; prayer, much prayer, is the one, sole condition of keeping this unction. Without unceasing prayer, the unction never comes to the preacher. Without perseverance in prayer, the unction, like the manna overkept, breeds worms.



CHAPTER 17

Prayer Marks Spiritual Leadership

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer.

—John Wesley



The apostles knew the necessity and worth of prayer to their ministry. They knew that their high commission as apostles, instead of relieving them from the necessity of prayer, committed them to it by a more urgent need; so that they were exceedingly jealous else some other important work should exhaust their time and prevent their praying as they ought; so they appointed laymen to look after the delicate and engrossing duties of ministering to the poor, that they (the apostles) might, unhindered, “give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Prayer is put first, and their relation to prayer is put most strongly—“give themselves to it,” making a business of it, surrendering themselves to praying, putting fervor, urgency, perseverance, and time in it.

How holy, apostolic men devoted themselves to this divine work of prayer! “Night and day praying exceedingly,” says Paul. “We will give ourselves continually to prayer” is the consensus of apostolic devotement. How

these New Testament preachers laid themselves out in prayer for God's people! How they put God in full force into their churches by their praying! These holy apostles did not vainly fancy that they had met their high and solemn duties by delivering faithfully God's word, but their preaching was made to stick and tell by the ardor and insistence of their praying. Apostolic *praying* was as taxing, toilsome, and imperative as apostolic *preaching*. They prayed mightily day and night to bring their people to the highest regions of faith and holiness. They prayed mightier still to hold them to this high spiritual altitude. The preacher who has never learned in the school of Christ the high and divine art of intercession for his people, will never learn the art of preaching, though homiletics be poured into him by the ton, and though he be the most gifted genius in sermon-making and sermon-delivery.

The prayers of apostolic, saintly leaders do much in making saints of those who are not apostles. If the church leaders, in after years, had been as particular and fervent in praying for their people as the apostles were, the sad, dark times of worldliness and apostasy had not marred the history and eclipsed the glory and arrested the advance of the church. Apostolic praying makes apostolic saints, and keeps apostolic times of purity and power in the church.

What loftiness of soul, what purity and elevation of motive, what unselfishness, what self-sacrifice, what exhaustive toil, what ardor of spirit, what divine tact are requisite to be an intercessor for men!

The preacher is to lay himself out in prayer for his people; not that they might be saved, simply, but that they be mightily saved. The apostles laid themselves out in prayer that their saints might be perfect; not that they should have a little relish for the things of God, but that they "might be filled with all the fullness of God." Paul did not rely on his apostolic preaching to secure this end, but "for this cause he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's praying carried Paul's converts farther along the highway of sainthood than Paul's preaching did. Epaphras did as much or more by prayer for the Colossian saints than by his preaching. He labored fervently always in prayer for them that "they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Preachers are preeminently God's leaders. They are primarily responsible for the condition of the church. They shape its character, give tone and direction to its life.

Much [in] every way depends on these leaders. They shape the times and the institutions. The church is divine, the treasure it encases is heavenly, but it bears the imprint of the human. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and it smacks of the vessel. The church of God makes, or is made by, its leaders. Whether it makes them or is made by them, it will be what its leaders are; spiritual if they are so, secular if they are, conglomerate [merged into a whole] if its leaders are. Israel's kings gave character to Israel's piety. A church rarely revolts against or rises above the religion of its leaders. Strongly spiritual leaders—men of holy might—at the lead, are tokens of God's favor; disaster and weakness follow the wake of feeble or worldly leaders. Israel had fallen low when God gave children to be their princes and babes to rule over them. No happy state is predicted by the prophets when children oppress God's Israel, and women rule over them. Times of spiritual leadership are times of great spiritual prosperity to the church.

Prayer is one of the eminent characteristics of strong spiritual leadership. Men of mighty prayer are men of might, and mold things. Their power with God has the conquering tread.

How can a man preach who does not get his message fresh from God in the closet? How can he preach without having his faith quickened, his vision cleared, and his heart warmed by his closeting with God? Alas, for the pulpit lips which are untouched by this closet flame. Dry and unctionless they will ever be, and truths divine will never come with power from such lips. As far as the real interests of religion are concerned, a pulpit without a closet will always be a barren thing.

A preacher may preach in an official, entertaining, or learned way without prayer, but between this kind of preaching and sowing God's precious seed with holy hands and prayerful, weeping hearts, there is an immeasurable distance.

A prayerless ministry is the undertaker for all God's truth and for God's church. He may have the most costly casket and the most beautiful flowers, but it is a funeral, notwithstanding the charming array. A prayerless Christian will never *learn* God's truth; a prayerless ministry will never be able to *teach* God's truth. Ages of millennial glory have been lost by a prayerless church. The coming of our Lord has been postponed indefinitely by a prayerless

church. Hell has enlarged herself and filled her dire caves in the presence of the dead service of a prayerless church.

The best, the greatest offering is an offering of prayer. If the preachers of the twentieth century will learn well the lesson of prayer, and use fully the power of prayer, the millennium will come to its noon ere the century closes. "Pray without ceasing" is the trumpet call to the preachers of the twentieth century. If the twentieth century will get their texts, their thoughts, their words, [and] their sermons in their closets, the next century will find a new Heaven and a new earth. The old sin-stained and sin-eclipsed Heaven and earth will pass away under the power of a praying ministry.



CHAPTER 18

Preachers Need the Prayers of the People

If some Christians that have been complaining of their ministers had said and acted less before men, and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to God for their ministers—had, as it were, risen and stormed Heaven with their humble, fervent, and incessant prayers for them—they would have been much more in the way of success.

—Jonathan Edwards



Somehow, the practice of praying in particular for the preacher has fallen into disuse or become discounted. Occasionally have we heard the practice arraigned as a disparagement of the ministry, being a public declaration by those who do it of the inefficiency of the ministry. It offends the pride of learning and self-sufficiency, perhaps, and these ought to be offended and rebuked in a ministry that is so derelict as to allow them to exist.

Prayer, to the preacher, is not simply the duty of his profession—a privilege—but it is a necessity. Air is not more necessary to the lungs than prayer is to the preacher. It is absolutely necessary for the preacher *to pray*. It is an absolute necessity that the preacher *be prayed for*. These two propositions are wedded into a union which ought never to know any divorce: the preacher must pray; the preacher must be prayed for. It will take all the praying he can do, and all the praying he can get done, to meet the fearful responsibilities and gain the largest,

truest success in his great work. The true preacher—next to the cultivation of the spirit and fact of prayer in himself, in their intensest form—covets with a great covetousness the prayers of God's people.

The holier a man is, the more does he estimate prayer; the clearer does he see that God gives himself to the praying ones, and that the measure of God's revelation to the soul is the measure of the soul's longing, importunate prayer for God. Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be projected by a prayerless preacher. Gifts, talents, education, eloquence, [of] God's call cannot abate the demand of prayer, but only intensify the necessity for the preacher to pray and to be prayed for. The more the preacher's eyes are opened to the nature, responsibility, and difficulties in his work, the more will he see—and if he be a true preacher the more will he feel—the necessity of prayer; not only the increasing demand to pray himself, but to call on others to help him by their prayers.

Paul is an illustration of this. If any man could project the gospel by dint of personal force, by brain power, by culture, by personal grace, by God's apostolic commission, God's extraordinary call, that man was Paul. That the preacher must be a man given to prayer, Paul is an eminent example. That the true apostolic preacher must have the prayers of other good people to give to his ministry its full quota of success, Paul is a *preeminent* example. He asks, he covets, he pleads in an impassioned way for the help of all God's saints. He knew that in the spiritual realm, as elsewhere, in union there is strength; that the concentration and aggregation of faith, desire, and prayer increased the volume of spiritual force until it became overwhelming and irresistible in its power. Units of prayer combined—like drops of water—make an ocean which defies resistance. So Paul, with his clear and full apprehension of spiritual dynamics, determined to make his ministry as impressive, as eternal, as irresistible as the ocean, by gathering all the scattered units of prayer and precipitating them on his ministry. May not the solution of Paul's preeminence in labors and results, and impress [impact] on the church and the world, be found in this fact that he was able to center on himself and his ministry more of prayer than others? To his brethren at Rome he wrote:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in prayers to God for me.

To the Ephesians he says:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

To the Colossians he emphasizes:

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

To the Thessalonians he says sharply, strongly: "Brethren, pray for us." Paul calls on the Corinthian church to help him: "Ye also helping together, by prayer for us." This was to be part of their work. They were to lay to the helping hand of prayer. He, in an additional and closing charge to the Thessalonian church about the importance and necessity of their prayers, says:

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.

He impresses the Philippians that all his trials and opposition can be made subservient to the spread of the gospel by the efficiency of their prayers for him. Philemon was to prepare a lodging for him, for through Philemon's prayer, Paul was to be his guest.

Paul's attitude on this question illustrates his humility and his deep insight into the spiritual forces which project the gospel. More than this, it teaches a lesson for all times—that if Paul was so dependent on the prayers of God's saints to give his ministry success, how much greater the necessity that the prayers of God's saints be centered on the ministry of today!

Paul did not feel that this urgent plea for prayer was to lower his dignity, lessen his influence, or depreciate his piety. What if it did? Let dignity go, let influence be destroyed, let his reputation be marred—he *must* have their prayers. Called, commissioned, chief of the apostles as he was, all his equipment was imperfect without the prayers of his people. He wrote letters everywhere, urging them to pray for him. Do you pray for your preacher? Do you pray for him in secret? Public prayers are of little worth unless they are founded

on or followed up by private praying. The praying ones are to the preacher as Aaron and Hur were to Moses. They hold up his hands and decide the issue that is so fiercely raging around them.

The plea and purpose of the apostles was to put the church to praying. They did not ignore the grace of cheerful giving. They were not ignorant of the place which religious activity and work occupied in the spiritual life; but not one nor all of these, in apostolic estimate or urgency, could at all compare in necessity and importance with prayer. The most sacred and urgent pleas were used, the most fervid exhortations, the most comprehensive and arousing words were uttered to enforce the all-important obligation and necessity of prayer.

"Put the saints everywhere to praying" is the burden of the apostolic effort and the keynote of apostolic success. Jesus Christ had striven to do this in the days of his personal ministry. As he was moved by infinite compassion at the ripened fields of earth perishing for lack of laborers, and pausing in his own praying—he tries to awaken the stupid sensibilities of his disciples to the duty of prayer, as he charges them,

Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.



CHAPTER 19

Deliberation Necessary to Largest Results from Prayer

This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul, if not in body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion and religious meditation, scripture-reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. I had better allot two hours or an hour and a half daily. I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had but a hurried half hour in a morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that, without a due measure of private devotions, the soul will grow lean. But all may be done through prayer—almighty prayer, I am ready to say—and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, pray, pray, pray!

—William Wilberforce



Our devotions are not measured by the clock, but time is of their essence. The ability to wait, and stay, and press, belongs essentially to our intercourse with God. Hurry, everywhere unseemingly and damaging, is so to an alarming extent in the great business of communion with God. Short devotions are the bane of deep piety. Calmness, grasp, [and] strength, are never the companions of hurry. Short devotions deplete spiritual vigor, arrest spiritual progress, sap spiritual foundations, [and] blight the root and bloom of spiritual life. They are the prolific source of backsliding, the sure indication of a superficial piety; they deceive, blight, rot the seed, and impoverish the soil.

It is true that [in the] Bible, prayers in word and print are short, but the praying men of the Bible were with God through many a sweet and holy wrestling hour. They won by few words but long waiting. The prayers Moses records may be short, but Moses prayed to God with fastings and mighty cryings forty days and nights.

The statement of Elijah's praying may be condensed to a few brief paragraphs, but doubtless Elijah, who when "praying, he prayed," spent many hours of fiery struggle and lofty intercourse with God before he could, with assured boldness, say to Ahab, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The verbal brief of Paul's prayers is short, but Paul "prayed night and day exceedingly." The "Lord's Prayer" is a divine epitome for infant lips, but the man Christ Jesus prayed many an all-night ere his work was done; and his all-night and long-sustained devotions gave to his work its finish and perfection, and to his character the fullness and glory of its divinity.

Spiritual work is taxing work, and men are loath to do it. Praying—true praying—costs an outlay of serious attention and of time, which flesh and blood do not relish. Few persons are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work will pass as well in the market. We can habituate ourselves to our beggarly praying until it looks well to us: at least it keeps up a decent form and quiets conscience—the deadliest of opiates! We can slight our praying, and not realize the peril till the foundations are gone. Hurried devotions make weak faith, feeble convictions, questionable piety. To be little *with* God is to be little *for* God. To cut short the praying makes the whole religious character short, scrimp, niggardly, and slovenly.

It takes good time for the full flow of God into the spirit. Short devotions cut the pipe of God's full flow. It takes time in the secret places to get the full revelation of God. Little time and hurry mar the picture.

Henry Martyn laments that "want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer through incessant sermon-making had produced much strangeness between God and his soul." he judged that he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations and too little to private communion with God. He was much impressed to set apart times for fasting and to devote times for solemn prayer. Resulting from this he records: "Was assisted this morning to pray for two hours."

Said William Wilberforce, the peer of kings:

I must secure more time for private devotions. I have been living far too public for me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul; it grows lean and faint. I have been keeping too late hours.

Of a failure in Parliament he says: "Let me record my grief and shame: and all, probably, from private devotions having been contracted, and so God let me stumble." More solitude and earlier hours was his remedy.

More time and early hours for prayer would act like magic to revive and invigorate many a decayed spiritual life. More time and early hours for prayer would be manifest in holy living. A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult a thing if our devotions were not so short and hurried. A Christly temper, in its sweet and passionless fragrance, would not be so alien and hopeless a heritage if our closet stay were lengthened and intensified. We live shabbily, because we pray meanly. Plenty of time to feast in our closets will bring marrow and fatness to our lives. Our ability to stay with God *in* our closet measures our ability to stay with God *out* of the closet. Hasty closet visits are deceptive, defaulting. We are not only deluded by them, but we are losers by them in many ways and in many rich legacies. Tarrying in the closet instructs and wins. We are taught by it, and the greatest victories are often the results of great waiting—waiting till words and plans are exhausted, and silent and patient waiting gains the crown. Jesus Christ asks with an affronted emphasis, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?"

To pray is the greatest thing we can do: and to do it well there must be calmness, time, and deliberation; otherwise it is degraded into the littlest and meanest of things. True praying has the largest results for good; and poor praying, the least. We cannot do too much of real praying; we cannot do too little of the sham. We must learn anew the worth of prayer, enter anew the school of prayer. There is nothing which it takes more time to learn. And if we would learn the wondrous art, we must not give a fragment here and there—"A little talk with Jesus," as the tiny saintlets sing—but we must demand and hold, with iron grasp, the best hours of the day for God and prayer, or there will be no praying worth the name.

This, however, is not a day of prayer. Few men there are who pray. Prayer is defamed by preacher and priest. In these days of hurry and bustle, of electricity and steam, men will not take time to pray. Preachers there are who "say

prayers" as a part of their program, on regular or state occasions; but who "stirs himself up to take hold upon God?" Who prays as Jacob prayed—till he is crowned as a prevailing, princely intercessor? Who prays as Elijah prayed—till all the locked-up forces of nature were unsealed and a famine-stricken land bloomed as the garden of God? Who prayed as Jesus Christ prayed, as out upon the mountain he "continued all night in prayer to God?" The apostles "gave themselves to prayer"—the most difficult thing to get men or even the preachers to do. Laymen there are who will give their money—some of them in rich abundance—but they will not "give themselves" to prayer, without which their money is but a curse. There are plenty of preachers who will preach and deliver great and eloquent addresses on the need of revival and the spread of the kingdom of God, but not many there are who will do that without which all preaching and organizing are worse than vain—pray. It is out of date, almost a lost art, and the greatest benefactor this age could have is the man who will bring the preachers and the church back to prayer.



CHAPTER 20

A Praying Pulpit Begets a Praying Pew

I judge that my prayer is more [powerful] than the Devil himself; if it were otherwise, Luther would have fared differently long before this. Yet men will not see and acknowledge the great wonders or miracles God works in my behalf. If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.

—Martin Luther



Only glimpses of the great importance of prayer could the apostles get before Pentecost. But the Spirit coming and filling on Pentecost elevated prayer to its vital and all-commanding position in the gospel of Christ. The call now of prayer to every saint is the Spirit's loudest and most exigent call. Saint-hood's piety is made, refined, perfected, by prayer. The gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long.

Where are the Christly leaders who can teach the modern saints how to pray and put them at it? Do we know we are raising up a prayerless set of saints? Where are the apostolic leaders who can put God's people to praying? Let them come to the front and do the work, and it will be the greatest work which can be done. An increase of educational facilities and a great increase of money force will be the direst curse to religion, if they are not sanctified by more and better praying than we are doing. More praying will not come as a

matter of course. The campaign for the twentieth- or thirtieth-century fund will not help our praying, but hinder, if we are not careful. Nothing but a specific effort from a praying leadership will avail. The chief ones must lead in the apostolic effort to radicate [plant deeply] the vital importance and fact of prayer in the heart and life of the church. None but praying leaders can have praying followers. Praying apostles will beget praying saints. A praying pulpit will beget praying pews. We do greatly need somebody who can set the saints to this business of praying. We are not a generation of praying saints. Non-praying saints are a beggarly gang of saints who have neither the ardor nor the beauty nor the power of saints. Who will restore this breach? The greatest will be of reformers and apostles, who can set the church to praying.

We put it as our most sober judgment that the great need of the church in this and all ages is men of such commanding faith, of such unsullied holiness, of such marked spiritual vigor and consuming zeal, that their prayers, faith, lives, and ministry will be of such a radical and aggressive form as to work spiritual revolutions which will form eras in individual and church life.

We do not mean men who get up sensational stirs by novel devices, nor those who attract by a pleasing entertainment; but men who can stir things, and work revolutions, by the preaching of God's Word and by the power of the Holy Ghost—revolutions which change the whole current of things.

Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory, and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God—men who can set the church ablaze for God; not in a noisy, showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves everything for God.

God can work wonders if he can get a suitable man. Men can work wonders if they can get God to lead them. The full endowment of the Spirit that turned the world upside down would be eminently useful in these latter days. Men who can stir things mightily for God, whose spiritual revolutions change the whole aspect of things, are the universal need of the church.

The church has never been *without* these men; they adorn its history; they are the standing miracles of the divinity of the church; their example and

history are an unfailing inspiration and blessing. An *increase* in their number and power should be our prayer.

That which has been done in spiritual matters can be done again, and be better done. This was Christ's view. He said,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The past has not exhausted the possibilities nor the demands for doing great things for God. The church that is dependent on its past history for its miracles of power and grace is a fallen church.

God wants elect men—men, out of whom, self and the world have gone by a severe crucifixion, by a bankruptcy which has so totally ruined self and the world that there is neither hope nor desire of recovery; men who by this insolvency and crucifixion have turned toward God perfect hearts.

Let us pray ardently that God's promise to prayer may be more than realized.



PURPOSE IN PRAYER



ORIGINAL FOREWORD

Edward McKendree Bounds was born in Shelby County, Missouri [on] August 15, 1835, and died August 24, 1913, in Washington, Georgia. He received common school education at Shelbyville and was admitted to the bar [as a lawyer] soon after his majority. He practiced law until called to preach the Gospel at the age of twenty-four. His first pastorate was [the] Monticello, Missouri Circuit. It was while serving as pastor of Brunswick, Missouri, that war was declared, and the young minister was made a prisoner of war because he would not take the oath of allegiance to the Federal Government. He was sent to St. Louis and later transferred to Memphis, Tennessee.

Finally securing his release, he traveled on foot nearly one hundred miles to join General Pierce's command in Mississippi, and was soon after made a chaplain of the Fifth Missouri Regiment, a position he held until near the close of the war, when he was captured and held as prisoner at Nashville, Tennessee.

After the war, the Rev. E. M. Bounds was pastor of churches in Tennessee and Alabama. In 1875, he was assigned to the St. Paul Methodist Church in St. Louis, and served there for four years. In 1876 he was married to Miss Emmie Barnette at Eufaula, Ala., who died ten years later. In 1887, he was married to Miss Hattie Barnette, who, with five children, survive[d] him.

After serving several pastorates, he was sent to the First Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri, for one year and to St. Paul Methodist Church for three years. At the end of his pastorate, he became the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*.

He was a forceful writer and a very deep thinker. He spent the last seventeen years of his life with his family in Washington, Georgia. Most of the time, he was reading, writing, and praying. He rose at four AM each day for many years, and was indefatigable in his study of the Bible. His writings were read by thousands of people, and were in demand by the church people of every Protestant denomination.

Bounds was the embodiment of humility, with a seraphic devotion to Jesus Christ. He reached that high place where self is forgotten and the love of God and humanity was the all-absorbing thought and purpose. At 76 years of age, he came to me in Brooklyn, NY, and so intense was he, that he awoke us at three o'clock in the morning, praying and weeping over the lost earth. All during the day he would go into the church next door and be found on his knees until called for his meals. This is what he called the "business of praying." Infused with this heavenly ozone, he wrote *Preacher and Prayer*,¹ a classic in its line, and now gone into several foreign languages, read by men and women all over the world. In 1909, while the Rev. A. C. Dixon was preaching in Dr. Broughton's Tabernacle, Atlanta, Georgia, I sent him a copy of *Preacher and Prayer* by Bounds. Hear what he says:

This little book was given me by a friend. I received another copy at Christmas from another friend. "Well," thought I, "there must be something worthwhile in the little book, or two of my friends would not have selected the same present for me." So I read the first page, until I came to the words: "Man is looking for better methods: God is looking for better men. Man is God's method." That was enough for me, and my appetite demanded more, until the book was finished, with pleasure.

This present volume is a companion work, and reflects the true spirit of a man whose business it was to live the gospel that he preached. He was not a luminary, but a SUN, and takes his place with Brainerd and Bramwell as untiring intercessors with God.

—H. W. Hodge, 1920²

¹ *Preacher and Prayer* was later published as *Power in Prayer*, also in this volume.

² Homer W. Hodge, whom Bounds disciplesd for 8 years, edited and published Bounds' manuscripts posthumously. (See Preface.)



CHAPTER I

Prayer Is a Keynote

My Creed leads me to think that prayer is efficacious, and surely a day's asking God to overrule all events for good is not lost. Still, there is a great feeling that when a man is praying, he's doing nothing, and this feeling makes us give undue importance to work, sometimes even to the hurrying over or even to the neglect of prayer.

Do not we rest in our day too much on the arm of flesh? Cannot the same wonders be done now as of old? Do not the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth still to show himself strong on behalf of those who put their trust in him? Oh that God would give me more practical faith in him! Where is now the Lord God of Elijah? He is waiting for Elijah to call on him.

—James Gilmour of Mongoia



The more praying there is in the world, the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil everywhere. Prayer, in one phase of its operation, is a disinfectant and a preventive. It purifies the air; it destroys the contagion of evil. Prayer is no fitful, short-lived thing. It is no voice crying unheard and unheeded in the silence. It is a voice which goes into God's ear, and it lives as long as God's ear is open to holy pleas, as long as God's heart is alive to holy things.

God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless. The lips that uttered them may be closed in death, the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat—but the prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them, and [so] prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world.

That man is the most immortal who has done the most and the best praying. They are God's heroes, God's saints, God's servants, God's vicegerents [administrative deputies]. A man can pray better because of the prayers of the past; a man can live holier because of the prayers of the past, the man of many and acceptable prayers, has done the truest and greatest service to the incoming generation. The prayers of God's saints strengthen the unborn generation against the desolating waves of sin and evil. Woe to the generation of sons who find their censers empty of the rich incense of prayer; whose fathers have been too busy or too unbelieving to pray, and perils inexpressible and consequences untold are their unhappy heritage. Fortunate are they whose fathers and mothers have left them a wealthy patrimony of prayer.

The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock in Heaven, by which Christ carries on his great work upon earth. The great throes and mighty convulsions on earth are the results of these prayers. Earth is changed, revolutionized, angels move on more powerful, more rapid wings, and God's policy is shaped as the prayers are more numerous, more efficient.

It is true that the mightiest successes that come to God's cause are created and carried on by prayer. God's day of power, the angelic days of activity and power—are when God's church comes into its mightiest inheritance of mightiest faith and mightiest prayer. God's conquering days are when the saints have given themselves to mightiest prayer. When God's house on earth is a house of prayer, *then* God's house in Heaven is busy and all potent in its plans and movements, *then* his earthly armies are clothed with the triumphs and spoils of victory, and his enemies defeated on every hand.

God conditions the very life and prosperity of his cause on prayer. The condition was put in the very existence of God's cause in this world. *Ask of me* is the one condition God puts in the very advance and triumph of his cause.

Men are to pray—to pray for the advance of God's cause. Prayer puts God in full force in the world. To a prayerful man, God is present in realized force; to a prayerful church, God is present in glorious power, and the second Psalm

is the divine description of the establishment of God's cause through Jesus Christ. All inferior dispensations have merged in the enthronement of Jesus Christ. God declares the enthronement of his Son. The nations are incensed with bitter hatred against his cause. God is described as laughing at their enfeebled hate. The Lord will laugh; the Lord will have them in derision. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." The decree has passed immutable and eternal:

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto me, "Thou art my Son;

This day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,

And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;

Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Ask of Me is the condition a praying people, willing and obedient. "And men shall pray for him continually." Under this universal and simple promise, men and women of old laid themselves out for God. They prayed, and God answered their prayers, and the cause of God was kept alive in the world by the flame of their praying.

Prayer became a settled and only condition to move his Son's kingdom. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." The strongest one in Christ's kingdom is he who is the best knocker. The secret of success in Christ's kingdom is the ability to pray. The one who can wield the power of prayer is the strong one, the holy one in Christ's kingdom. The most important lesson we can learn is how to pray.

Prayer is the keynote of the most sanctified life, of the holiest ministry. He does the most for God, who is the highest skilled in prayer. Jesus Christ exercised his ministry after this order.



CHAPTER 2

Prayer Can Change God's Purpose

... we ought to give ourselves to God with regard to things both temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling his will, whether he lead us by suffering, or by consolation, for all would be equal to a soul truly resigned. Prayer is nothing else but a sense of God's presence. —Brother Lawrence



Be sure you look to your secret duty; keep that up whatever you do. The soul cannot prosper in the neglect of it. Apostasy generally begins at the closet door. Be much in secret fellowship with God. It is secret trading that enriches the Christian.

Pray alone. Let prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt at night. The best way to fight against sin is to fight it on our knees. —Philip Henry



The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the Great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy. —Robert Hall



An hour of solitude passed in sincere and earnest prayer, or the conflict with, and conquest over, a single passion or subtle bosom sin, will teach us more of thought, will more effectually awaken the faculty and form the habit of reflection, than a year's study in the schools without them. —Coleridge



A man may pray night and day and deceive himself, but no man can be assured of his sincerity who does not pray. Prayer is faith passing into act. A union of the will and intellect realizing in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays. Less than this is wishing or lip work, a sham or a mummery.

If God should restore me again to health, I have determined to study nothing but the Bible. Literature is inimical to spirituality if it be not kept under with a firm hand.

—Richard Cecil

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Our sanctification does not depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own. The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer. Prayer is nothing else but a sense of the presence of God.

—Brother Lawrence

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Let me burn out for God. After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is the great thing. Oh, that I may be a man of prayer.

—Henry Martyn

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The possibilities and necessity of prayer, its power and results, are manifested in arresting and changing the purposes of God and in relieving the stroke of his power. Abimelech was smitten by God: "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children." "For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife."

Job's miserable, mistaken, comforters had so deported themselves in their controversy with Job that God's wrath was kindled against them. "My servant Job shall pray for you," said God, "for him will I accept." "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

Jonah was in dire condition when "the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest." When lots were cast, "the lot fell upon Jonah." He was cast overboard into the sea, but

the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah . . . Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly . . . and the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

When the disobedient prophet lifted up his voice in prayer, God heard and sent deliverance.

Pharaoh was a firm believer in the possibilities of prayer and its ability to relieve. When staggering under the woeful curses of God, he pleaded with Moses to intercede for him. "Entreat the Lord for me," was his pathetic appeal, four times repeated when the plagues were scourging Egypt. Four times were these urgent appeals made to Moses, and four times did prayer lift the dread curse from the hard king and his doomed land.

The blasphemy and idolatry of Israel in making the golden calf and declaring their devotions to it were fearful crimes. The anger of God waxed hot, and he declared that he would destroy the offending people. The Lord was very wroth with Aaron also, and to Moses he said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them." But Moses prayed, and kept on praying; day and night he prayed forty days. He makes the record of his prayer struggle. "I fell down," he says,

before the Lord at the first forty days and nights; I did neither eat bread nor drink water because of your sins which ye sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was hot against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened to me at this time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron, to have destroyed him. And I prayed for him also at the same time.

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It was the purpose of God to destroy that great and wicked city. But Nineveh prayed, covered with sackcloth; sitting in ashes, she cried "mightily to God," and "God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them; and he did it not."

The message of God to Hezekiah was: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." And Hezekiah wept sore. God said to Isaiah, "Go, say to Hezekiah, 'I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.'"

These men knew how to pray and how to prevail in prayer. Their faith in prayer was no passing attitude that changed with the wind or with their own feelings and circumstances; it was a fact that God heard and answered, that his ear was ever open to the cry of his children, and that the power to do what was

asked of him was commensurate with his willingness. And thus these men, strong in faith and in prayer,

. . . subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, [and] turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Everything then, as now, was possible to the men and women who knew how to pray. Prayer, indeed, opened a limitless storehouse, and God's hand withheld nothing. Prayer introduced those who practiced it into a world of privilege, and brought the strength and wealth of Heaven down to the aid of finite man. What rich and wonderful power was theirs who had learned the secret of victorious approach to God! With Moses it saved a nation; with Ezra it saved a church.

And yet, strange as it seems when we contemplate the wonders of which God's people had been witness, there came a slackness in prayer. The mighty hold upon God—that had so often struck awe and terror into the hearts of their enemies—lost its grip. The people, backslidden and apostate, had gone off from their praying—if the bulk of them had ever truly prayed. The Pharisee's cold and lifeless praying was substituted for any genuine approach to God, and because of that formal method of praying, the whole worship became a parody of its real purpose. A glorious dispensation, and gloriously executed, was it by [in the days of] Moses, by Ezra, by Daniel and Elijah, by Hannah and Samuel; but the circle seems limited and short-lived; the praying ones were few and far between. They had no survivors, none to imitate their devotion to God, none to preserve the roll of the elect.

In vain had the decree established the divine order, the divine call. *Ask of me.* From the earnest and fruitful crying to God, turned their faces to pagan gods, and cried in vain for the answers that could never come. And so they sank into that godless and pitiful state that has lost its object in life, when the link with the Eternal has been broken. Their favored dispensation of prayer was forgotten; they knew not how to pray.

What a contrast to the achievements that brighten up other pages of holy writ. The power working through Elijah and Elisha in answer to prayer reached down even to the very grave. In each case, a child was raised from the dead, and the powers of famine were broken. "The supplications of a righteous man avail much." Elijah was a man of like passions with us. He prayed

fervently that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Jonah prayed while imprisoned in the great fish, and he came to dry land, saved from storm and sea and monsters of the deep by the mighty energy of his praying.

How wide the gracious provision of the grace of praying, as administered in that marvelous dispensation. They prayed wondrously. Why could not their praying save the dispensation from decay and death? Was it not because they lost the fire, without which all praying degenerates into a lifeless form? It takes effort and toil and care to prepare the incense. Prayer is no laggard's work. When all the rich, spiced graces from the body of prayer have, by labor and beating, been blended and refined and intermixed, the fire is needed to unloose the incense and make its fragrance rise to the throne of God. The fire that consumes creates the spirit and life of the incense. Without fire, prayer has no spirit; it is, like dead spices, for corruption and worms.

The casual, intermittent prayer is never bathed in this divine fire. For the man who thus prays is lacking in the earnestness that lays hold of God, determined not to let him go until the blessing comes. "Pray without ceasing," counseled the great apostle. That is the habit that drives prayer right into the mortar that holds the building stones together. "You can do more than pray *after* you have prayed," said the godly Dr. A. J. Gordon, "but you cannot do more than pray *until* you have prayed." The story of every great Christian achievement is the history of answered prayer.

"The greatest and the best talent that God gives to any man or woman in this world is the talent of prayer," writes Principal Alexander Whyte.

And the best usury that any man or woman brings back to God when he comes to reckon with them at the end of this world, is a life of prayer. And those servants best put their Lord's money "to the exchangers" who rise early and sit late, as long as they are in this world, ever finding out and ever following after better and better methods of prayer, and ever forming more secret, more steadfast, and more spiritually fruitful habits of prayer, till they literally "pray without ceasing," and till they continually strike out into new enterprises in prayer, and new achievements, and new enrichments.

Martin Luther, when once asked what his plans for the following day were, answered: "Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to

do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Cromwell, too, believed in being much upon his knees. Looking on one occasion at the statues of famous men, he turned to a friend and said: "Make mine kneeling, for thus I came to glory."

It is only when the whole heart is gripped with the passion of prayer that the life-giving fire descends, for none but the earnest man gets access to the ear of God.



CHAPTER 3

Prayer Has Conditions

When thou feelest thyself most indisposed to prayer, yield not to it, but strive and endeavor to pray even when thou thinkest thou canst not pray. —Hildersam



It was among the Parthians the custom that none was to give their children any meat in the morning before they saw the sweat on their faces, and you shall find this to be God's usual course—not to give his children the taste of his delights till they begin to sweat in seeking after them.

—Richard Baxter



Of all the duties enjoined by Christianity, none is more essential and yet more neglected than prayer. Most people consider the exercise a fatiguing ceremony, which they are justified in abridging as much as possible. Even those whose profession or fears lead them to pray, pray with such languor and wanderings of mind that their prayers, far from drawing down blessings, only increase their condemnation.

—Fenelon



More praying and better is the secret of the whole matter. More time for prayer, more relish and preparation to meet God, to commune with God through Christ—this has in it the whole of the matter. Our manner and matter of praying ill become us. The attitude and relationship of God and the Son

are the eternal relationship of Father and Son, of asking and giving—the Son always asking, the Father always giving:

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Jesus is to be always praying through his people. "And men shall pray for him continually." "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for my peoples." We must prepare ourselves to pray; to be like Christ, to pray like Christ.

Man's access in prayer to God opens everything, and makes his impoverishment his wealth. All things are his through prayer. The wealth and the glory—all things are Christ's. As the light grows brighter and prophets take in the nature of the restoration, the divine record seems to be enlarged.

Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, "Ask me of things that are to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens and all their host have I commanded."

To man is given to command God, with all this authority and power in the demands of God's earthly kingdom. Heaven, with all it has, is under tribute to carry out the ultimate, final and glorious purposes of God. Why then is the time so long in carrying out these wise benedictions for man? Why then does sin so long reign? Why are the oath-bound covenant promises so long in coming to their gracious end? Sin reigns, Satan reigns, sighing marks the lives of many; all tears are fresh and full.

Why is all this so? We have not prayed to bring the evil to an end; we have not prayed as we must pray. We have not met the conditions of prayer.

Ask of me. Ask of God. We have not rested on prayer. We have not made prayer the sole condition. There has been violation of the primary condition of prayer. We have not prayed aright. We have not prayed at all. God is willing to give, but we are slow to ask. The Son, through his saints, is ever praying and God the Father is ever answering.

Ask of me. In the invitation is conveyed the assurance of answer; the shout of victory is there and may be heard by the listening ear. The Father holds the authority and power in his hands. How easy is the condition, and yet how long

are we in fulfilling the conditions! Nations are in bondage; the uttermost parts of the earth are still unpossessed. The earth groans; the world is still in bondage; Satan and evil hold sway.

The Father holds himself in the attitude of Giver—*Ask of me*—and that petition to God the Father empowers all agencies, inspires all movements. The Gospel is divinely inspired. Back of all its inspirations is prayer. *Ask of me* lies back of all movements. Standing as the endowment of the enthroned Christ is the oath-bound covenant of the Father, "*Ask of me*, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "And men shall pray to him continually."

Ever are the prayers of holy men streaming up to God, as fragrant as the richest incense. And God in many ways is speaking to us, declaring his wealth and our impoverishment. "I am the Maker of all things; the wealth and glory are mine. *Command ye me.*"

We can do all things by God's aid, and can have the whole of his aid by asking. The Gospel, in its success and power, depends on our ability to pray. The dispensations of God depend on man's ability to pray. We can have all that God has. *Command ye me.* This is no figment of the imagination, no idle dream, no vain fancy. The life of the church is the highest life. Its office is to pray. Its prayer life is the highest life, the most odorous, the most conspicuous.

The book of Revelation says nothing about prayer as a great duty, a hallowed service, but much about prayer in its aggregated force and energies. It is the prayer force ever living and ever praying; it is all saints' prayers going out as a mighty, living energy while the lips that uttered the words are stilled and sealed in death, while the living church has an energy of faith to inherit the forces of all the past praying and make it deathless.

The statement by the Baptist philosopher, John Foster, contains the purest philosophy and the simple truth of God, for God has no force and demands no conditions but prayer.

More and better praying will bring the surest and readiest triumph to God's cause; feeble, formal, listless praying brings decay and death. The church has its sheet-anchor in the closet; its magazine [ammunition] stores are there.

"I am convinced," Foster continues,

. . . that every man who, amidst his serious projects, is apprized of his dependence upon God as completely as that dependence is a fact, will be impelled to pray and anxious to induce his serious friends to pray almost every hour. He will not, without it, promise himself any noble success any more than a mariner would expect to reach a distant coast by having his sails spread in a stagnation of air.

I have intimated my fear that it is visionary to expect an unusual success in the human administration of religion unless there are unusual omens: now a most emphatical spirit of prayer would be such an omen; and the individual who should determine to try its last possible efficacy might probably find himself becoming a much more prevailing agent in his little sphere. And if the whole, or the greater number of the disciples of Christianity were, with an earnest and unalterable resolution of each to combine, that Heaven should not withhold one single influence which the very utmost effort of conspiring and persevering supplication would obtain, it would be a sign that a revolution of the world was at hand.

Edward Payson, one of God's own, says of this statement of Foster:

Very few missionaries since the apostles probably have tried the experiment. He who shall make the first trial will, I believe, effect wonders. Nothing that I could write, nothing that an angel could write, would be necessary to him who should make this trial.

One of the principal results of the little experience which I have had as a Christian minister is a conviction that religion consists very much in giving God that place in our views and feelings which he actually fills in the universe. We know that in the universe he is all in all. So far as he is constantly all in all to us, so far as we comply with the Psalmist's charge to his soul, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God;" so far, I apprehend, have we advanced towards perfection. It is comparatively easy to wait upon God; but to wait upon him *only*—to feel, so far as our strength, happiness, and usefulness are concerned, as if all creatures and second causes were annihilated, and we were alone in the universe with God—is, I suspect, a difficult and rare attainment. At least, I am sure it is one which I am very far from having made. In proportion as we make this attainment we shall find everything easy; for we shall become, emphatically, men of prayer; and we may say of prayer as Solomon says of money, that it answereth all things.

This same John Foster said, when approaching death:

I never prayed more earnestly nor probably with such faithful frequency. "Pray without ceasing" has been the sentence repeating itself in the silent thought, and I am sure it must be my practice till the last conscious hour of life. Oh, why not throughout that long, indolent, inanimate half-century past?

And yet this is the way in which we all act about prayer. Conscious as we are of its importance, of its vital importance, we yet let the hours pass away as a blank, and can only lament in death the irremediable loss.

When we calmly reflect upon the fact that the progress of our Lord's kingdom is dependent upon prayer, it is sad to think that we give so little time to the holy exercise. Everything depends upon prayer, and yet we neglect it, not only to our own spiritual hurt, but also to the delay and injury of our Lord's cause upon the earth. The forces of good and evil are contending for the world. If we would, we could add to the conquering power of the army of righteousness, and yet our lips are sealed, our hands hang listlessly by our side, and we jeopardize the very cause in which we profess to be deeply interested, by holding back from the prayer chamber.

Prayer is the one prime, eternal condition by which the Father is pledged to put the Son in possession of the world. Christ prays through his people. Had there been importunate, universal, and continuous prayer by God's people, long ere this the earth had been possessed for Christ. The delay is not to be accounted for by the inveterate obstacles, but by the lack of the right asking. We do more of everything else than of praying. As poor as our giving is, our contributions of money exceed our offerings of prayer. Perhaps in the average congregation fifty aid in paying, where one saintly, ardent soul shuts itself up with God and wrestles for the deliverance of the heathen world. Official praying on set or state occasions counts for nothing in this estimate. We emphasize other things more than we do the necessity of prayer.

We are saying prayers after an orderly way, but we have not the world in the grasp of our faith. We are not praying after the order that moves God and brings all divine influences to help us. The world needs more true praying to save it from the reign and ruin of Satan.

We do not pray as Elijah prayed. John Foster puts the whole matter to a practical point. "When the church of God," he says, "is aroused to its obligation

and duties and right faith to claim what Christ has promised—"all things whatsoever"—a revolution will take place."

But not all praying is praying. The driving power, the conquering force in God's cause, is God himself. "Call upon me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not," is God's challenge to prayer. Prayer puts God in full force into God's work. "Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me"—God's *carte blanche* to prayer. Faith is only omnipotent when on its knees, and its outstretched hands take hold of God, then it draws to the utmost of God's capacity; for only a praying faith can get God's "all things whatsoever." Wonderful lessons are the Syrophenician woman, the importunate widow, and the friend at midnight, of what dauntless prayer can do in mastering or defying conditions, in changing defeat into victory and triumphing in the regions of despair. Oneness with Christ, the acme of spiritual attainment, is glorious in all things; most glorious in that we can then "ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us." Prayer in Jesus' name puts the crowning crown on God, because it glorifies him through the Son and pledges the Son to give to men "whatsoever and anything" they shall ask.

In the New Testament, the marvelous prayer of the Old Testament is put to the front, that it may provoke and stimulate our praying, and it is preceded with a declaration, the dynamic energy of which we can scarcely translate.

The supplication of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Our paucity in results, the cause of all leanness, is solved by the apostle James—"Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it on your pleasures."

That is the whole truth in a nutshell.



CHAPTER 4

Attitudes Regarding Prayer

The potency of prayer hath subdued the strength of fire; it had bridled the rage of lions, hushed the anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of Heaven, assuaged diseases, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. Prayer is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a Heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings.

—Chrysostom



The prayers of holy men appease God's wrath, drive away temptations, resist and overcome the devil, procure the ministry and service of angels, rescind the decrees of God. Prayer cures sickness and obtains pardon; it arrests the sun in its course and stays the wheels of the chariot of the moon; it rules over all gods and opens and shuts the storehouses of rain, it unlocks the cabinet of the womb and quenches the violence of fire; it stops the mouths of lions and reconciles our suffering and weak faculties with the violence of torment and violence of persecution; it pleases God and supplies all our need.

—Jeremy Taylor



Perfect prayer is only another name for love.

—Fenelon



*More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.*

—Tennyson



It was said of the late C. H. Spurgeon, that he glided from laughter to prayer with the naturalness of one who lived in both elements. With him, the habit of prayer was free and unfettered. His life was not divided into compartments, the one shut off from the other with a rigid exclusiveness that barred all intercommunication. He lived in constant fellowship with his Father in Heaven. He was ever in touch with God, and thus it was as natural for him to pray as it was for him to breathe.

"What a fine time we have had; let us thank God for it," he said to a friend on one occasion, when, out under the blue sky and wrapped in glorious sunshine, they had enjoyed a holiday with the unfettered enthusiasm of school-boys. Prayer sprang as spontaneously to his lips as did ordinary speech, and never was there the slightest incongruity in his approach to the divine throne straight from any scene in which he might be taking part.

That is the attitude with regard to prayer that ought to mark every child of God. There are, and there ought to be, stated seasons of communication with God when, [with] everything else shut out, we come into his presence to talk to him and to let him speak to us; and out of such seasons springs that beautiful habit of prayer that weaves a golden bond between earth and Heaven. Without such stated seasons, the habit of prayer can never be formed; without them there is no nourishment for the spiritual life. By means of them the soul is lifted into a new atmosphere—the atmosphere of the heavenly city, in which it is easy to open the heart to God and to speak with him as friend speaks with friend.

Thus, in every circumstance of life, prayer is the most natural outpouring of the soul, the unhindered turning to God for communion and direction.

Whether in sorrow or in joy, in defeat or in victory, in health or in weakness, in calamity or in success, the heart leaps to meet with God just as a child runs to his mother's arms, ever sure that with her is the sympathy that meets every need.

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his autobiography, records that when Mr. Wesley was returning to England by ship [with Dr. Clark], considerable delay was caused by contrary winds. Wesley was reading when he became aware of some confusion on board, and asking what was the matter, he was informed that the wind was contrary. "Then," was his reply, "let us go to prayer."

After Dr. Clarke had prayed, Wesley broke out into fervent supplication, which seemed to be more the offering of faith than of mere desire. "Almighty and everlasting God," he prayed,

Thou hast sway everywhere, and all things serve the purpose of thy will. Thou holdest the winds in thy fists and sittest upon the water floods, and reignest a King for ever. Command these winds and these waves that they obey thee, and take us speedily and safely to the haven whither we would go.

The power of this petition was felt by all. Wesley rose from his knees, made no remark, but took up his book and continued reading. Dr. Clarke went on deck, and to his surprise found the vessel under sail, standing on her right course. Nor did she change till she was safely at anchor. On the sudden and favorable change of wind, Wesley made no remark; so fully did he *expect to be heard* that he took it for granted that he *was heard*.

That was prayer with a purpose—the definite and direct utterance of one who knew that he had the ear of God, and that God had the willingness as well as the power to grant the petition which he asked of him.

Major D. W. Whittle, in an introduction to the wonders of prayer, says of George Muller, of Bristol:

I met Mr. Muller in the express, the morning of our sailing from Quebec to Liverpool. About half an hour before the tender was to take the passengers to the ship, he asked of the agent if a deck chair had arrived for him from New York. He was answered, "No," and was told that it could not possibly come in time for the steamer. I had with me a chair I had just purchased, and told Mr. Muller of the place nearby, and suggested, as but a few moments remained, that he had better buy one at once. His reply was, "No, my brother. Our heavenly Father will send the chair from New York. It is one

used by Mrs. Muller. I wrote ten days ago to a brother, who promised to see it forwarded here last week. He has not been prompt, as I would have desired, but I am sure our heavenly Father will send the chair. Mrs. Muller is very sick on the sea, and has particularly desired to have this same chair, and not finding it here yesterday, we have made special prayer that our heavenly Father would be pleased to provide it for us, and we will trust him to do so." As this dear man of God went peacefully on board, running the risk of Mrs. Muller making the trip without a chair, when, for a couple of dollars, she could have been provided for, I confess I feared Mr. Muller was carrying his faith principles too far and not acting wisely. I was kept at the express office ten minutes after Mr. Muller left. Just as I started to hurry to the wharf, a team drove up the street, and on top of a load just arrived from New York was *Mr. Muller's chair*. It was sent at once to the tender and placed in *my hands* to take to Mr. Muller, just as the boat was leaving the dock (the Lord having a lesson for me). Mr. Muller took it with the happy, pleased expression of a child who has just received a kindness deeply appreciated, and reverently removing his hat and folding his hands over it, he thanked the heavenly Father for sending the chair.

One of Melancthon's correspondents writes of Luther's praying:

I cannot enough admire the extraordinary, cheerfulness, constancy, faith and hope of the man in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these gracious affections by a very diligent study of the Word of God. *Then, not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer at least three of his very best hours.* Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious God! What spirit and what faith is there in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was in the divine presence, and yet with as firm a hope and confidence as he would address a father or a friend. "I know," said he, "Thou art our Father and our God; and therefore I am sure thou wilt bring to naught the persecutors of thy children. For shouldst thou fail to do this, thine own cause, being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern. We, by thy providence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou, therefore wilt be our defense." Whilst I was listening to Luther praying in this manner, at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted.

Of William Bramwell, a noted Methodist preacher in England, wonderful for his zeal and prayer, the following is related by a sergeant major.

In July 1811, our regiment was ordered for Spain, then the seat of a protracted and sanguinary [bloody] war. My mind was painfully exercised with the thoughts of leaving my dear wife and four helpless children in a strange country, unprotected and unprovided for. Mr. Bramwell felt a lively interest in our situation, and his sympathizing spirit seemed to drink in all the agonized feelings of my tender wife. He supplicated the throne of grace day and night in our behalf. My wife and I spent the evening previous to our march at a friend's house, in company with Mr. Bramwell, who sat in a very pensive mood, and appeared to be in a spiritual struggle all the time. After supper, he suddenly pulled his hand out of his bosom, laid it on my knee, and said: "Brother Riley, mark what I am about to say! You are not to go to Spain. Remember what I tell you, you are not; for I have been wrestling with God on your behalf, and when my heavenly Father condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold on himself, I do not easily let him go; no, not until I am favored with an answer. Therefore you may depend upon it that the next time I hear from you, you will be settled in quarters." This came to pass exactly as he said. The next day the order for going to Spain was countermanded.

These men prayed with a purpose. To them God was not far away, in some inaccessible region, but near at hand, ever ready to listen to the call of his children. There was no barrier between. They were on terms of perfect intimacy, if one may use such a phrase in relation to man and his Maker. No cloud obscured the face of the Father from his trusting child, who could look up into the divine countenance and pour out the longings of his heart. And that is the type of prayer which God never fails to hear. He knows that it comes from a heart at one with his own; from one who is entirely yielded to the heavenly plan, and so he bends his ear and gives to the pleading child the assurance that his petition has been heard and answered.

Have we not all had some such experience when, with set and undeviating purpose, we have approached the face of our Father? In an agony of soul we have sought refuge from the oppression of the world in the anteroom of Heaven; the waves of despair seemed to threaten destruction, and as no way of escape was visible anywhere, we fell back, like the disciples of old, upon the power of our Lord, crying to him to save us, lest we perish. And then in the twinkling of an eye, the thing was done. The billows sank into a calm; the howling wind died down at the

divine command; the agony of the soul passed into a restful peace, as over the whole being there crept the consciousness of the divine presence, bringing with it the assurance of answered prayer and sweet deliverance.

"I tell the Lord my troubles and difficulties, and wait for him to give me the answers to them," says one man of God.

And it is wonderful how a matter that looked very dark will in prayer become clear as crystal by the help of God's Spirit. I think Christians fail so often to get answers to their prayers because they do not wait long enough on God. They just drop down and say a few words, and then jump up and forget it and expect God to answer them. Such praying always reminds me of the small boy ringing his neighbor's doorbell, and then running away as fast as he can go.

When we acquire the habit of prayer, we enter into a new atmosphere. "Do you expect to go to Heaven?" asked someone of a devout Scotsman. "Why, man, I live there," was the quaint and unexpected reply. It was a pithy statement of a great truth, for all the way to Heaven, is Heaven begun, to the Christian who walks near enough to God to hear the secrets he has to impart.

This attitude is beautifully illustrated in a story of Horace Bushnell, told by Dr. Parkes Cadman. Bushnell was found to be suffering from an incurable disease. One evening the Rev. Joseph Twichell visited him, and, as they sat together under the starry sky, Bushnell said: "One of us ought to pray." Twichell asked Bushnell to do so, and Bushnell began his prayer; burying his face in the earth, he poured out his heart until, said Twichell, in recalling the incident, "I was afraid to stretch out my hand in the darkness, lest I should touch God."

To have God thus near is to enter the holy of holies—to breathe the fragrance of the heavenly air, to walk in Eden's delightful gardens. Nothing but prayer can bring God and man into this happy communion. That was the experience of Samuel Rutherford, just as it is the experience of everyone who passes through the same gateway. When this saint of God was confined in jail at one time for conscience's sake, he enjoyed, in a rare degree, the divine companionship, recording in his diary that Jesus entered his cell, and that at his coming "every stone flashed like a ruby."

Many others have borne witness to the same sweet fellowship, when prayer had become the one habit of life that meant more than anything else to them. David Livingstone lived in the realm of prayer and knew its gracious

influence. It was his habit every birthday to write a prayer, and on the next to the last birthday of all, this was his prayer:

O divine one, I have not loved thee earnestly, deeply, sincerely enough.
Grant, I pray thee, that before this year is ended I may have finished my task.

It was just on the threshold of the year that followed, that his faithful men, as they looked into the hut of Ilala, while the rain dripped from the eaves, saw their master on his knees beside his bed in an attitude of prayer. He had died on his knees in prayer.

Stonewall Jackson was a man of prayer. Said he:

I have so fixed the habit in my mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without asking God's blessing, never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal, never take a letter from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward, never change my classes in the lecture-room without a minute's petition for the cadets who go out and for those who come in.

James Gilmour, the pioneer missionary to Mongolia, was a man of prayer. He had a habit in his writing of never using a blotter. He made a rule when he got to the bottom of any page to wait until the ink dried, and spend the time in prayer.

In this way their whole being was saturated with the divine, and they became the reflection of the heavenly fragrance and glory. Walking with God down the avenues of prayer, we acquire something of his likeness, and unconsciously we become witnesses to others of his beauty and his grace. Professor James, in his famous work, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, tells of a man of forty-nine who said:

God is more real to me than any thought or thing or person. I feel his presence positively, and the more as I live in closer harmony with his laws as written in my body and mind. I feel him in the sunshine or rain; and all mingled with a delicious restfulness most nearly describes my feelings. I talk to him as to a companion in prayer and praise, and our communion is delightful. He answers me again and again, often in words so clearly spoken that it seems my outer ear must have carried the tone, but generally in strong mental impressions. Usually a text of Scripture, unfolding some new view of him and his love for me, and care for my safety . . . That he is mine and I am his never leaves

me; it is an abiding joy. Without it life would be a blank—a desert, a shoreless, trackless waste.

Equally notable is the testimony of Sir Thomas Browne, the beloved physician who lived at Norwich in 1605, and was the author of a very remarkable book of wide circulation, *Religio Medici*. In spite of the fact that England was passing through a period of national convulsion and political excitement, he found comfort and strength in prayer. "I have resolved," he wrote in a journal found among his private papers after his death,

to pray more and pray always, to pray in all places where quietness inviteth, in the house, on the highway and on the street; and to know no street or passage in this city that may not witness that I have not forgotten God.

And he adds:

I purpose to take occasion of praying upon the sight of any church which I may pass, that God may be worshiped there in spirit, and that souls may be saved there; to pray daily for my sick patients and for the patients of other physicians; at my entrance into any home to say, "May the peace of God abide here"; after hearing a sermon, to pray for a blessing on God's truth, and upon the messenger; upon the sight of a beautiful person to bless God for his creatures, to pray for the beauty of such an one's soul, that God may enrich her with inward graces, and that the outward and inward may correspond; upon the sight of a deformed person, to pray God to give them wholeness of soul, and by and by to give them the beauty of the resurrection.

What an illustration of the praying spirit! Such an attitude represents prayer without ceasing, reveals the habit of prayer in its unceasing supplication, in its uninterrupted communion, in its constant intercession. What an illustration, too, of purpose in prayer! Of how many of us can it be said that as we pass people in the street we pray for them, or that as we enter a home or a church we remember the inmates or the congregation in prayer to God?

The explanation of our thoughtlessness or forgetfulness lies in the fact that prayer with so many of us is simply a form of selfishness; it means asking for something for ourselves—that and nothing more.

And from such an attitude we need to pray to be delivered.



CHAPTER 5

Prayer Has No Substitutes

The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy.

—Robert Hall



The church, intent on the acquisition of temporal power, had well nigh abandoned its spiritual duties; and its empire, which rested on spiritual foundations, was crumbling with their decay, and threatened to pass away like an unsubstantial vision.

—Lea's Inquisition



Are we praying as Christ did? Do we abide in him? Are our pleas and spirit the overflow of his spirit and pleas? Does love rule the spirit—perfect love?

These questions must be considered as proper and apposite at a time like the present. We do fear that we are doing more of other things than prayer. This is not a praying age; it is an age of great activity, of great movements, but one in which the tendency is very strong to stress the seen and the material, and to neglect and discount the unseen and the spiritual. Prayer is the greatest of all forces, because it honors God and brings him into active aid.

There can be no substitute, no rival for prayer; it stands alone as the great spiritual force, and this force must be imminent and acting. It cannot be

dispensed with during one generation, nor held in abeyance for the advance of any great movement—it must be continuous and particular, always, everywhere, and in everything. We cannot run our spiritual operations on the prayers of the past generation. Many persons believe in the efficacy of prayer, but not many pray. Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things; the simplest and the sublimest; the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities—they are limited only by the omnipotence of God.

Few Christians have anything but a vague idea of the power of prayer; fewer still have any experience of that power. The church seems almost wholly unaware of the power God puts into her hand; this spiritual *carte blanche* on the infinite resources of God's wisdom and power is rarely, if ever, used—never used to the full measure of honoring God. It is astounding how poor the use, how little the benefits. Prayer is our most formidable weapon, but the one in which we are the least skilled, the most averse to its use. We do everything else for the heathen, save the thing God wants us to do; the only thing which does any good—makes all else we do efficient.

To graduate in the school of prayer is to master the whole course of a religious life. The first and last stages of holy living are crowned with praying. It is a life trade. The hindrances of prayer are the hindrances in a holy life. The conditions of praying are the conditions of righteousness, holiness and salvation. A cobbler¹ in the trade of praying is a bungler in the trade of salvation.

Prayer is a trade to be learned. We must be apprentices and serve our time at it. Painstaking care, much thought, practice and labor are required to be a skillful tradesman in praying. Practice in this, as well as in all other trades, makes perfect. Toiling hands and hearts *only* make proficient in this heavenly trade.

In spite of the benefits and blessings which flow from communion with God, the sad confession must be made that we are not praying much. A very small number comparatively lead in prayer at the meetings. Fewer still pray in their families. Fewer still are in the habit of praying regularly in their closets. Meetings specially for prayer are as rare as frost in June. In many churches there is neither the name nor the semblance of a prayer meeting. In the town

¹ Cobbler: (archaic) bungler, someone clumsy at work.

and city churches the prayer meeting in name is not a prayer meeting in fact. A sermon or a lecture is the main feature. Prayer is the nominal attachment.

Our people are not essentially a praying people. That is evident by their lives.

Prayer and a holy life are one. They mutually act and react. Neither can survive alone. The absence of the one is the absence of the other. The monk [had] depraved prayer, substituted superstition for praying, mummeries and routine for a holy life. We are in danger of substituting churchly work and a ceaseless round of showy activities for prayer and holy living. A holy life does not live *in* the closet, but it cannot live *without* the closet. If, by any chance, a prayer chamber should be established without a holy life, it would be a chamber without the presence of God in it.

Put the saints everywhere to praying, [this] is the burden of the apostolic effort and the key note of apostolic success. Jesus Christ had striven to do this in the days of his personal ministry. He was moved by infinite compassion at the ripened fields of earth, perishing for lack of laborers, and pausing in his own praying, he tries to awaken the sleeping sensibilities of his disciples to the duty of prayer, as he charges them: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." And he spake a parable to them to this end, that *men ought always to pray*.

Only glimpses of this great importance of prayer could the apostles get before Pentecost. But the Spirit coming and filling on Pentecost elevated prayer to its vital and all-commanding position in the gospel of Christ. The call now of prayer to every saint is the Spirit's loudest and most exigent call. Sainthood's piety is made, refined, perfected, by prayer. The Gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long.

Where are the Christlike leaders who can teach the modern saints how to pray and put them at it? Do our leaders know we are raising up a prayerless set of saints? Where are the apostolic leaders who can put God's people to praying? Let them come to the front and do the work, and it will be the greatest work that can be done. An increase of educational facilities and a great increase of money force [resources] will be the direst curse to religion, if they are not sanctified by more and better praying than we are doing.

More praying will not come as a matter of course. The campaign for the twentieth or thirtieth century will not help our praying, but hinder, if we are

not careful. Nothing but a specific effort from a praying leadership will avail. None but praying leaders can have praying followers. Praying apostles will beget praying saints. A praying pulpit will beget praying pews. We do greatly need somebody who can set the saints to this business of praying. We are a generation of non-praying saints. Non-praying saints are a beggarly gang of saints, who have neither the ardor, nor the beauty, nor the power of saints. Who will restore this branch? The greatest will be of reformers and apostles, who can set the church to praying.

Holy men have, in the past, changed the whole force of affairs, revolutionized character and country by prayer. And such achievements are still possible to us. The power is only wanting to be used. Prayer is but the expression of faith.

Time would fail to tell of the mighty things wrought by prayer—for by it, holy ones have

subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens, [and] women received their dead raised to life again.

Prayer honors God; it dishonors self. It is man's plea of weakness, ignorance, want—a plea which Heaven cannot disregard. God delights to have us pray.

Prayer is not the foe to work, it does not paralyze activity. It works mightily; prayer itself is the greatest work. It springs activity, stimulates desire and effort. Prayer is not an opiate but a tonic, it does not lull to sleep but arouses anew for action. The lazy man does not, will not, cannot pray, for prayer demands energy. Paul calls it a striving, an agony. With Jacob it was a wrestling; with the Syrophenician woman, it was a struggle which called into play all the higher qualities of the soul, and which demanded great force to meet.

The closet is not an asylum for the indolent and worthless Christian. It is not a nursery where none but babes belong. It is the battlefield of the church; its citadel; the scene of heroic and unearthly conflicts. The closet is the base of supplies for the Christian and the church. Cut off from it, there is nothing left but retreat and disaster. The energy for work, the mastery over self, the deliverance from fear, all spiritual results and graces, are much advanced by prayer. The difference between the strength, the experience, the holiness of Christians is found in the contrast in their praying.

Purpose in Prayer: Prayer Has No Substitutes

Few, short, feeble prayers always betoken a low spiritual condition. Men ought to pray much and apply themselves to it with energy and perseverance. Eminent Christians have been eminent in prayer. The deep things of God are learned nowhere else. Great things for God are done by great prayers. He who prays much, studies much, loves much, works much—does much for God and humanity. The execution of the Gospel, the vigor of faith, the maturity and excellence of spiritual graces, wait on prayer.



CHAPTER 6

Characteristics of True Prayer

"Nothing is impossible to industry," said one of the seven sages of Greece. Let us change the word "industry" for "persevering prayer," and the motto will be more Christian and more worthy of universal adoption. I am persuaded that we are all more deficient in a spirit of prayer than in any other grace. God loves importunate prayer so much that he will not give us much blessing without it. And the reason that he loves such prayer is that he loves us and knows that it is a necessary preparation for our receiving the richest blessings which he is waiting and longing to bestow.

I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything but it came at some time—no matter at how distant a day—somehow, in some shape, probably the last I would have devised, it came.

—Adoniram Judson



It is good, I find, to persevere in attempts to pray. If I cannot pray with perseverance or continue long in my address to the Divine Being, I have found that the more I do in secret prayer the more I have delight to do, and have enjoyed more of the spirit of prayer; and frequently I have found the contrary, when by journeying or otherwise, I have been deprived of retirement.

—David Brainerd



Christ puts importunity as a distinguishing characteristic of true praying. We must not only pray, but we must pray with great urgency, with intentness

and with repetition. We must not only pray, but we must pray again and again. We must not get tired of praying. We must be thoroughly in earnest, deeply concerned about the things for which we ask, for Jesus Christ made it very plain that the secret of prayer and its success lie in its urgency. We must press our prayers upon God.

In a parable of exquisite pathos and simplicity, our Lord taught not simply that men ought to pray, but that men ought to pray with full heartiness, and press the matter with vigorous energy and brave hearts.

And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, "There was in a city, a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' And he would not for a while: but afterwards he said within himself, 'Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

This poor woman's case was a most hopeless one, but importunity brings hope from the realms of despair, and creates success where neither success nor its conditions existed. There could be no stronger case to show how unwearied and dauntless importunity gains its ends where everything else fails. The preface to this parable says: "He spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." He knew that men would soon get fainthearted in praying, so to hearten us, he gives this picture of the marvelous power of importunity.

The widow, weak and helpless, is helplessness personified; bereft of every hope and influence which could move an unjust judge, she yet wins her case solely by her tireless and offensive importunity. Could the necessity of importunity, its power and tremendous importance in prayer, be pictured in deeper or more impressive coloring? It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force, and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances. We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer.

That is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Another parable spoken by Jesus enforces the same great truth. A man at midnight goes to his friend for a loan of bread. His pleas are strong, based on friendship and the embarrassing and exacting demands of necessity, but these all fail. He gets no bread, but he stays and presses, and waits and gains. Sheer importunity succeeds where all other pleas and influences had failed.

The case of the Syrophenician woman is a parable in action. She is arrested in her approaches to Christ by the information that he will not see anyone. She is denied his presence, and then in his presence is treated with seeming indifference, with the chill of silence and unconcern. She presses and approaches; the pressure and approach are repulsed by the stern and crushing statement that he is not sent to her kith or kind, that she is reprobated from his mission and power. She is humiliated by being called a dog. Yet she accepts all, overcomes all, wins all by her humble, dauntless, invincible importunity. The Son of God, pleased, surprised, overpowered by her unconquerable importunity, says to her: "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Jesus Christ surrenders himself to the importunity of a great faith. "And shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

Jesus Christ puts ability to importune as one of the elements of prayer, one of the main conditions of prayer. The prayer of the Syrophenician woman is an exhibition of the matchless power of importunity, of a conflict more real and involving more of vital energy, endurance, and all the higher elements than was ever illustrated in the conflicts of Isthmia or Olympia.

The first lessons of importunity are taught in the Sermon on the Mount—"Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." These are steps of advance—"For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Without continuance, the prayer may go unanswered. Importunity is made up of the ability to hold on, to press on, to wait with unrelaxed and unrelaxable grasp, restless desire and restful patience. Importunate prayer is not an incident, but the *main thing*—not a performance but a passion, not a need but a necessity.

Prayer in its highest form and grandest success assumes the attitude of a wrestler with God. It is the contest, trial, and victory of faith; a victory not

secured from an enemy, but from him who tries our faith that he may enlarge it: that tests our strength to make us stronger. Few things give such quickened and permanent vigor to the soul as a long exhaustive season of importunate prayer. It makes an experience [into] an epoch, a new calendar for the spirit, a new life to religion, a soldierly training. The Bible never wearies in its pressure and illustration of the fact that the highest spiritual good is secured as the return of the outgoing of the highest form of spiritual effort. There is neither encouragement nor room in Bible religion for feeble desires, listless efforts, lazy attitudes; all must be strenuous, urgent, ardent. Inflamed desires, impassioned, unwearied insistence delight Heaven. God would have his children incorrigibly in earnest and persistently bold in their efforts. Heaven is too busy to listen to half-hearted prayers or to respond to pop-calls.

Our whole being must be in our praying; like John Knox, we must say and feel, "Give me Scotland, or I die." Our experience and revelations of God are born of our costly sacrifice, our costly conflicts, our costly praying. The wrestling—all night praying—of Jacob made an era never to be forgotten in Jacob's life, brought God to the rescue, changed Esau's attitude and conduct, changed Jacob's character, saved and affected his life, and entered into the habits of a nation.

Our seasons of importunate prayer cut themselves, like the print of a diamond, into our hardest places, and mark with ineffaceable traces our characters. They are the salient periods of our lives—the memorial stones which endure, and to which we turn.

Importunity, it may be repeated, is a condition of prayer. We are to press the matter, not with vain repetitions, but with urgent repetitions. We repeat—not to count the times—but to gain the prayer. We cannot quit praying because heart and soul are in it. We pray "with all perseverance." We hang to our prayers, because *by them* we live. We press our pleas because we must have them or die. Christ gives us two most expressive parables to emphasize the necessity of importunity in praying. Perhaps Abraham lost Sodom by failing to press to the utmost his privilege of praying. Joash, we know, lost because he stayed his smiting.

Perseverance counts much with God as well as with man. If Elijah had ceased at his first petition, the heavens would have scarcely yielded their rain to his feeble praying. If Jacob had quit praying at decent bedtime, he would

scarcely have survived the next day's meeting with Esau. If the Syrophenician woman had allowed her faith to faint by silence, humiliation, or repulse, or to stop mid-way its struggles, her grief-stricken home would never have been brightened by the healing of her daughter.

"Pray and never faint," is the motto Christ gives us for praying. It is the test of our faith, and the severer the trial and the longer the waiting, the more glorious the results.

The benefits and necessity of importunity are taught by Old Testament saints. Praying men must be strong in hope, and faith, and prayer. They must know how to wait and to press, to wait on God and be in earnest in our approaches to him.

Abraham has left us an example of importunate intercession, in his passionate pleading with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, and if, as already indicated, he had not ceased in his asking, perhaps God would not have ceased in his giving. "Abraham left off asking before God left off granting." Moses taught the power of importunity when he interceded for Israel forty days and forty nights, by fasting and prayer. And he succeeded in his importunity.

Jesus, in his teaching and example, illustrated and perfected this principle of Old Testament pleading and waiting. How strange that the only Son of God, who came on a mission direct from his Father, whose only Heaven on earth, whose only life and law, were to do his Father's will in that mission—what a mystery that he should be under the law of prayer, that the blessings which came to him were impregnated and purchased by prayer; stranger still that importunity in prayer was the process by which his wealthiest supplies from God were gained. Had he not prayed with importunity, no transfiguration would have been in his history, no mighty works had rendered divine his career. His all-night praying was that which filled with compassion and power his all-day work. The importunate praying of his life crowned his death with its triumph. He learned the high lesson of submission to God's will in the struggles of importunate prayer, before he illustrated that submission so sublimely on the cross.

"Whether we like it or not," said Mr. Spurgeon,

... asking is the rule of the kingdom. "Ask, and ye shall receive." It is a rule that never will be altered in anybody's case. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the elder brother of the family, but God has not relaxed the rule for him. Remember

this text: Jehovah says to his own Son, "*Ask of me*, and I will give thee the Heaven for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." If the royal and divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that he may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favor. Why should it be? What reason can be pleaded why we should be exempted from prayer? What argument can there be why we should be deprived of the privilege and delivered from the necessity of supplication? I can see none: can you? God will bless Elijah and send rain on Israel, but Elijah must pray for it. If the chosen nation is to prosper, Samuel must plead for it. If the Jews are to be delivered, Daniel must intercede. God will bless Paul, and the nations shall be converted through him, but Paul must pray. Pray he did without ceasing; his epistles show that he expected nothing except by asking for it. If you may have everything by asking, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is, and I beseech you to abound in it.

There is not the least doubt that much of our praying fails for lack of persistency. It is without the fire and strength of perseverance. Persistence is of the essence of true praying. It may not be always called into exercise, but it must be there as the reserve force. Jesus taught that perseverance is the essential element of prayer. Men must be in earnest when they kneel at God's footstool.

Too often we get fainthearted and quit praying at the point where we ought to begin. We let go at the very point where we should hold on strongest. Our prayers are weak because they are not impassioned by an unfailing and resistless will.

God loves the importunate pleader, and sends him answers that would never have been granted but for the persistency that refuses to let go until the petition craved for is granted.



CHAPTER 7

Pray Always

I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises as private devotion, religious meditation, Scripture reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. God would perhaps prosper me more in spiritual things if I were to be more diligent in using the means of grace. I had better allot more time, say two hours or an hour and a half, to religious exercises daily, and try whether by so doing I cannot preserve a frame of spirit more habitually devotional, a more lively sense of unseen things, a warmer love to God, and a greater degree of hunger and thirst after righteousness, a heart less prone to be soiled with worldly cares, designs, passions, and apprehension and a real undissembled longing for Heaven, its pleasures and its purity.

—William Wilberforce



Men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint." The words are the words of our Lord, who not only ever [continually] sought to impress upon his followers the urgency and the importance of prayer, but set them an example, which they alas, have been far too slow to copy.

The *always* speaks for itself. Prayer is not a meaningless function or duty to be crowded into the busy or the weary ends of the day, and we are not obeying our Lord's command when we content ourselves with a few minutes upon our knees in the morning rush or late at night when the faculties, tired with the tasks of the day, call out for rest. God is always within call, it is true; his

ear is ever attentive to the cry of his child, but we can never get to know him if we use the vehicle of prayer as we use the telephone—for a few words of hurried conversation. Intimacy requires development. We can never know God as it is our privilege to know him, by brief and fragmentary and unconsidered repetitions of intercessions that are requests for personal favors and nothing more. That is not the way in which we can come into communication with Heaven's King. "The goal of prayer is the ear of God," a goal that can only be reached by patient and continued and continuous waiting upon him, pouring out our heart to him and permitting him to speak to us. Only by so doing can we expect to know him, and as we come to know him better, we shall spend more time in his presence and find that presence a constant and ever-increasing delight.

Always does not mean that we are to neglect the ordinary duties of life; what it means is that the soul which has come into intimate contact with God in the silence of the prayer-chamber is never out of conscious touch with the Father, that the heart is always going out to him in loving communion, and that the moment the mind is released from the task upon which it is engaged, it returns as naturally to God as the bird does to its nest. What a beautiful conception of prayer we get if we regard it in this light, if we view it as a constant fellowship, an unbroken audience with the King. Prayer then loses every vestige of dread which it may once have possessed; we regard it no longer as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege which is to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty.

Thus, when we open our eyes in the morning, our thought instantly mounts heavenward. To many Christians, the morning hours are the most precious portion of the day, because they provide the opportunity for the hallowed fellowship that gives the keynote to the day's program. And what better introduction can there be to the never-ceasing glory and wonder of a new day, than to spend it alone with God? It is said that Mr. Moody, at a time when no other place was available, kept his morning watch in the coal-shed, pouring out his heart to God, and finding in his precious Bible a true "feast of fat things."

George Muller also combined Bible study with prayer in the quiet morning hours. At one time his practice was to give himself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. Then his plan underwent a change. As he himself put it:

I saw the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words for the Lord's blessing upon his precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated on, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably thus, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

The study of the Word and prayer go together, and where we find the one truly practiced, the other is sure to be seen in close alliance.

But we do not pray always. That is the trouble with so many of us. We need to pray much more than we do, and much longer than we do.

Robert Murray McCheyne, gifted and saintly—of whom it was said, that . . .

. . . Whether viewed as a son, a brother, a friend, or a pastor, he was the most faultless and attractive exhibition of the true Christian they had ever seen embodied in a living form,

—knew what it was to spend much time upon his knees, and he never wearied in urging upon others the joy and the value of holy intercession. "God's children should pray," he said. "They should cry day and night to him. God hears every one of your cries in the busy hour of the daytime and in the lonely watches of the night." In every way, by preaching, by exhortation when present, and by letters when absent, McCheyne emphasized the vital duty of prayer, importunate and unceasing prayer.

In his diary we find this:

In the morning was engaged in preparing the head, then the heart. This has been frequently my error, and I have always felt the evil of it, especially in prayer. Reform it then, O Lord.

While on his trip to the Holy Land, he wrote:

For much of our safety I feel indebted to the prayers of my people. If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we would find done in answer to the prayers of God's children.

In an ordination sermon, he said to the preacher [who was being ordained]:

Give yourself to prayers and the ministry of the Word. If you do not pray, God will probably lay you aside from your ministry, as he did me, to teach you to pray. Remember Luther's maxim, "To have prayed well is to have studied well." Get your texts from God, your thoughts, your words. Carry the names of the little flock upon your breast like the High Priest. Wrestle for the unconverted. Luther spent his last three hours in prayer; John Welch prayed seven or eight hours a day. He used to keep a plaid [blanket] on his bed that he might wrap himself in when he rose during the night. Sometimes his wife found him on the ground lying weeping. When she complained, he would say, "O, woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them." The people he exhorted and charged: "Pray for your pastor. Pray for his body, that he may be kept strong and spared many years. Pray for his soul, that he may be kept humble and holy, a burning and shining light. Pray for his ministry, that it may be abundantly blessed, that he may be anointed to preach good tidings. Let there be no secret prayer without naming him before your God, no family prayer without carrying your pastor in your hearts to God."

"Two things," says his biographer, "he seems never to have ceased from—the cultivation of personal holiness, and the most anxious efforts to win souls." The two are the inseparable attendants on the ministry of prayer. Prayer fails when the desire and effort for personal holiness fail. No person is a soul-winner who is not an adept in the ministry of prayer. "It is the duty of ministers," says this holy man, "to begin the reformation of religion and manner with themselves, families, etc., with confession of past sin, earnest prayer for direction, grace and full purpose of heart." He begins with himself under the head of "Reformation in Secret Prayer," and he resolves:

I ought not to omit any of the parts of prayer—confession, adoration, thanksgiving, petition and intercession. There is a fearful tendency to omit *confession*, proceeding from low views of God and his law, slight views of my heart, and the sin of my past life. This must be resisted. There is a constant

tendency to omit *adoration* when I forget to whom I am speaking, when I rush heedlessly into the presence of Jehovah without thought of his awful name and character. When I have little eyesight for his glory, and little admiration of his wonders, I have the native tendency of the heart to omit giving *thanks*, and yet it is specially commanded. Often when the heart is dead to the salvation of others, I omit *intercession*, and yet it, especially, is the spirit of the great Advocate who has the name of Israel on his heart. I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, and then have family prayer and breakfast and forenoon callers, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system; it is unscriptural. Christ rose before day and went into a solitary place. David says, "Early will I seek thee; thou shalt early hear my voice." Mary Magdalene came to the sepulcher while it was yet dark. Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness; and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. I feel it is far better to begin with God, to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another. "When I awake, I am still with thee." If I have slept too long, or I am going an early journey, or my time is in any way shortened, it is best to dress hurriedly and to have a few minutes alone with God than to give up all for lost. But in general it is best to have at least one hour alone with God before engaging in anything else. I ought to spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray, as David and John Welch.

McCheyne believed in being *always* in prayer, and his fruitful life, short though that life was, affords an illustration of the power that comes from long and frequent visits to the secret place where we keep tryst with our Lord.

Men of McCheyne's stamp are needed today—praying men, who know how to give themselves to the greatest task demanding their time and their attention; men who can give their whole heart to the holy task of intercession, men who can *pray through*. God's cause is committed to men; God commits himself to men. Praying men are the vicegerents of God; they do his work and carry out his plans.

We are obliged to pray if we be citizens of God's kingdom. Prayerlessness is expatriation, or worse, from God's kingdom. It is outlawry, a high crime, a constitutional breach. The Christian who relegates prayer to a subordinate place in his life soon loses whatever spiritual zeal he may have once possessed, and the church that makes little of prayer cannot maintain vital piety, and is

powerless to advance the Gospel. The Gospel cannot live, fight, conquer without prayer—prayer unceasing, instant [urgent], and ardent.

Little prayer is the characteristic of a backslidden age and of a backslidden church. Whenever there is little praying in the pulpit or in the pew, spiritual bankruptcy is imminent and inevitable.

The cause of God has no commercial age, no cultured age, no age of education, no age of money. But it has one golden age, and that is the age of prayer. When its leaders are men of prayer, when prayer is the prevailing element of worship—like the incense giving continual fragrance to its service—then the cause of God will be triumphant.

Better praying and more of it, that is what we need. We need holier men, and more of them: holier women, and more of them to pray—women like Hannah, who, out of their greatest griefs and temptations, brewed their greatest prayers. Through prayer Hannah found her relief. Everywhere the church was backslidden and apostate, her foes were victorious. Hannah gave herself to prayer, and in sorrow she multiplied her praying. She saw a great revival born of her praying. When the whole nation was oppressed, [the] prophet and priest Samuel was born to establish a new line of priesthood, and her praying warmed into life—a new life for God. Everywhere, religion revived and flourished. God, true to his promise, “*Ask of me,*” though the praying came from a woman’s broken heart, heard and answered, sending a new day of holy gladness to revive his people.

So once more, let us apply the emphasis and repeat that the great need of the church in this and all ages, is men of such commanding faith, of such unsullied holiness, of such marked spiritual vigor and consuming zeal, that they will work spiritual revolutions through their mighty praying.

Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but a capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of a thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one’s self in God’s glory, and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God. Men who can set the church ablaze for God, not in a noisy, showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat, that melts and moves every thing for God.

And, to return to the vital point, secret praying is the test, the gauge, the conserver of man’s relation to God. The prayer-chamber, while it is the test of

the sincerity of our devotion to God, becomes also the measure of the devotion. The self-denial, the sacrifices which we make for our prayer-chambers, the frequency of our visits to that hallowed place of meeting with the Lord, the lingering to stay, the loathness to leave, are values which we put on communion alone with God, the price we pay for the Spirit's trysting hours of heavenly love.

The prayer-chamber conserves our relation to God. It hems every raw edge; it tucks up every flowing and entangling garment; girds up every fainting loin. The sheet-anchor holds not the ship more surely and safely than the prayer-chamber holds to God. Satan has to break our hold on, and close up our way to the prayer-chambers, ere he can break our hold on God or close up our way to Heaven.

*Be not afraid to pray; to pray is right;
Pray if thou canst with hope, but ever pray,
Though hope be weak or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness if there be no light;
And if for any wish thou dare not pray
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.*



CHAPTER 8

Men Are Called to Pray

In God's name I beseech you—let prayer nourish your soul as your meals nourish your body. Let your fixed seasons of prayer keep you in God's presence through the day, and his presence, frequently remembered through it, be an ever-fresh spring of prayer. Such a brief, loving recollection of God renews a man's whole being, quiets his passions, supplies light and counsel in difficulty, gradually subdues the temper, and causes him to possess his soul in patience, or rather gives it up to the possession of God.

—Fenelon



Devoted too much time and attention to outward and public duties of the ministry. But this has a mistaken conduct, for I have learned that neglect of much and fervent communion with God in meditation and prayer is not the way to redeem the time, nor to fit me for public ministrations.

I rightly attribute my present deadness to want of sufficient time and tranquility for private devotion. Want of more reading, retirement, and private devotion—I have little mastery over my own tempers. An unhappy day to me, for want of more solitude and prayer. If there be anything I do, if there be anything I leave undone, let me be perfect in prayer. After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is the great thing. Oh, that I may be a man of prayer.

—Henry Martyn



That the men had quit praying in Paul's time, we cannot certainly affirm. They have, in the main, quit praying now. They are too busy to pray. Time and strength and every faculty are laid under tribute to money, to business, to the affairs of the world. Few men lay themselves out in great praying. The great business of praying is a hurried, petty, starved, beggarly business with most men.

St. Paul calls a halt, and lays a levy on men for prayer. "Put the men to praying" is Paul's unfailing remedy for great evils in church, in state, in politics, in business, in home. "Put the men to praying," then politics will be cleansed, business will be thriftier, the church will be holier, the home will be sweeter.

I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior . . . I desire, therefore, that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing (I Timothy 2:1-3, 8).

Praying women and children are invaluable to God, but if their praying is not supplemented by praying men, there will be a great loss in the power of prayer—a great breach and depreciation in the value of prayer, great paralysis in the energy of the Gospel. Jesus Christ spake a parable unto the people, telling them that men ought always to pray and not faint. Men who are strong in everything else ought to be strong in prayer, and never yield to discouragement, weakness or depression. Men who are brave, persistent, [and] redoubtable in other pursuits ought to be full of courage, unfainting, strong-hearted in prayer.

Men are to pray; *all men* are to pray. Men, as distinguished from women, men in their strength, in their wisdom. There is an absolute, specific command that the men pray; there is an absolute imperative necessity that men pray. The first of beings, man, should also be first in prayer.

The men are to pray for men. The direction is specific and classified. Just underneath we have a specific direction with regard to women. About prayer, its importance, wideness, and practice, the Bible here deals with the men in contrast to, and distinct from, the women. The men are definitely commanded, seriously charged, and warmly exhorted to pray. Perhaps it was that

men were averse to prayer, or indifferent to it; it may be that they deemed it a small thing, and gave to it neither time nor value nor significance. But God would have all men pray, and so the great apostle lifts the subject into prominence and emphasizes its importance.

For prayer is of transcendent importance. Prayer is the mightiest agent to advance God's work. Praying hearts and hands only can do God's work. Prayer succeeds when all else fails. Prayer has won great victories, and rescued, with notable triumph, God's saints, when every other hope was gone. Men who know how to pray are the greatest boon God can give to earth—they are the richest gift earth can offer Heaven. Men who know how to use this weapon of prayer are God's best soldiers, his mightiest leaders.

Praying men are God's chosen leaders. The distinction between the leaders that God brings to the front to lead and bless his people, and those leaders who owe their position of leadership to a worldly, selfish, unsanctified selection, is this—God's leaders are preeminently men of prayer. This distinguishes them, as [it is] the simple, divine attestation of their call, the seal of their separation by God. Whatever of other graces or gifts they may have, the gift and grace of prayer towers above them all. In whatever else they may share or differ, in the gift of prayer, they are one.

What would God's leaders be without prayer? Strip Moses of his power in prayer—a gift that made him eminent in pagan estimate—and the crown is taken from his head, the food and fire of his faith are gone. Elijah, without his praying, would have neither record nor place in the divine legation, his life insipid, cowardly; its energy, defiance, and fire gone. Without Elijah's praying, the Jordan would never have yielded to the stroke of his mantle, nor would the stern angel of death have honored him with the chariot and horses of fire. The argument that God used to quiet the fears and convince Ananias of Paul's condition and sincerity, is the epitome of his history, the solution of his life and work—"Behold, he prayeth."

Paul, Luther, Wesley—what would these chosen ones of God be without the distinguishing and controlling element of prayer? They were leaders for God, because mighty in prayer. They were not leaders because of brilliancy in thought, because exhaustless in resources, because of their magnificent culture or native endowment, but leaders because—by the power of prayer—they could command the power of God. "Praying men" means much more than

men who say prayers; much more than men who pray by habit. It means men with whom prayer is a mighty force—an energy that moves Heaven and pours untold treasures of good on earth.

Praying men are the safety of the church from the materialism that is affecting all its plans and polity, and which is hardening the life-blood. The insinuation circulates, as a secret, deadly poison, that the church is not so dependent on purely spiritual forces as it used to be—that changed times and changed conditions have brought it out of its spiritual straits and dependencies, and put it where other forces can bear it to its climax. A fatal snare of this kind has allured the church into worldly embraces, dazzled her leaders, weakened her foundations, and shorn her of much of her beauty and strength. Praying men are the saviors of the church from this material tendency. They pour into it the original spiritual forces, lift it off the sandbars of materialism, and press it out into the ocean depths of spiritual power. Praying men keep God in the church in full force; keep His hand on the helm, and train the church in its lessons of strength and trust.

The number and efficiency of the laborers in God's vineyard in all lands is dependent on the men of prayer. The mightiness of these men of prayer increases—by the divinely arranged process—the number and success of the consecrated labors. Prayer opens wide their doors of access, gives holy aptness to enter, and holy boldness, firmness, and fruitage. Praying men are needed in all fields of spiritual labor. There is no position in the church of God, high or low, which can be well filled without instant prayer. No position where Christians are found that does not demand the full play of a faith that always prays and never faints. Praying men are needed in the house of business, as well as in the house of God, that they may order and direct trade, not according to the maxims of this world, but according to Bible precepts and the maxims of the heavenly world.

Men of prayer are needed especially in the positions of church influence, honor, and power. These leaders of church thought, of church work, and of church life should be men of signal [exceptional] power in prayer. It is the praying heart that sanctifies the toil and skill of the hands, and the toil and wisdom of the head. Prayer keeps work in the line of God's will, and keeps thought in the line of God's Word. The solemn responsibilities of leadership (in a large or limited sphere) in God's church, should be so hedged about with

prayer that, between it and the world, there should be an impassable gulf, so elevated and purified by prayer that neither cloud nor night should stain the radiance nor dim the sight of a constant meridian [highest possible] view of God. Many church leaders seem to think if they can be prominent as men of business, of money, influence, of thought, of plans, of scholarly attainments, of eloquent gifts, of taking [attractive] conspicuous activities—that these are enough, and will atone for the absence of the higher spiritual power which much praying only can give. But how vain and paltry are these in the serious work of bringing glory to God, controlling the church for him, and bringing it into full accord with its divine mission.

Praying men are the men that have done so much for God in the past. They are the ones who have won the victories for God, and spoiled his foes. They are the ones who have set up his kingdom in the very camps of his enemies. There are no other conditions of success in this day. The twentieth century has no relief statute to suspend the necessity or force of prayer—no substitute by which its gracious ends can be secured. We are shut up to [forced to see] this—praying hands *only* can build for God. They are God's mighty ones on earth, his master-builders. They may be destitute of all else, but with the wrestlings and prevailings of a simple-hearted faith, they are mighty, the mightiest for God. Church leaders may be gifted in all else, but without this greatest of gifts, they are as Samson shorn of his locks, or as the Temple without the divine presence or the divine glory, and on whose altars the heavenly flame has died.

The only protection and rescue from worldliness lies in our intense and radical spirituality; and our only hope for the existence and maintenance of this high, saving spirituality, under God, is in the purest and most aggressive leadership—a leadership that knows the secret power of prayer, the sign by which the church has conquered, and that has conscience, conviction, and courage to hold true to her symbols, true to her traditions, and true to the hidings of her power. We need this prayerful leadership; we must have it—that by the perfection and beauty of its holiness, by the strength and elevation of its faith, by the potency and pressure of its prayers, by the authority and spotlessness of its example, by the fire and contagion of its zeal, by the singularity, sublimity, and unworldliness of its piety—it may influence God and hold and mold the church to its heavenly pattern.

Such leaders, how mightily they are felt. How their flame arouses the church! How they stir it by the force of their Pentecostal presence! How they embattle and give victory by the conflicts and triumphs of their own faith! How they fashion it by the impress and importunity of their prayers! How they inoculate it by the contagion and fire of their holiness! How they lead the march in great spiritual revolutions! How the church is raised from the dead by the resurrection call of their sermons! Holiness springs up in their wake, as flowers at the voice of spring, and where they tread, the desert blooms as the garden of the Lord. God's cause demands such leaders along the whole line of official position from subaltern [subordinate officer] to superior. How feeble, aimless, or worldly are our efforts, how demoralized and vain for God's work without them!

The gift of these leaders is not in the range of ecclesiastical power. They are God's gifts. Their being, their presence, their number, and their ability are the tokens of his favor; their lack the sure sign of his disfavor, the presage [foretelling] of his withdrawal. Let the church of God be on her knees before the Lord of hosts, that he may more mightily endow the leaders we already have, and put others in rank, and lead all along the line of our embattled front.

The world is coming into the church at many points and in many ways. It oozes in; it pours in; it comes in with brazen front, or soft, insinuating disguise; it comes in at the top, and comes in at the bottom; and percolates through many a hidden way.

For praying men and holy men we are looking—men whose presence in the church will make it like a censer of holiest incense flaming up to God. With God, the man counts for everything. Rites, forms, [and] organizations are of small moment; unless they are backed by the holiness of the man, they are offensive in His sight.

Incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Why does God speak so strongly against his own ordinances? Personal purity had failed. The impure man tainted all the sacred institutions of God and defiled them. God regards the man in so important a way as to put a kind of discount on all else. Men have built him glorious temples and have striven and

exhausted themselves to please God by all manner of gifts; but in lofty strains he has rebuked these proud worshipers and rejected their princely gifts.

Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things hath been, saith the Lord. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.

Turning away in disgust from these costly and profane offerings, he declares: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

This truth—that God regards the personal purity of the man—is fundamental. This truth suffers when ordinances are made much of and forms of worship multiply. The man and his spiritual character depreciate as church ceremonials increase. The simplicity of worship is lost in religious aesthetics, or in the gaudiness of religious forms.

This truth that the personal purity of the individual is the only thing God cares for, is lost sight of when the church begins to estimate men for what they *have*. When the church eyes a man's money, social standing, [or] his belongings in any way, then spiritual values are at a fearful discount, and the tear of penitence, the heaviness of guilt, are never seen at her portals. Worldly bribes have opened and stained its pearly gates, by the entrance of the impure.

This truth—that God is looking after personal purity—is swallowed up when the church has a greed for numbers. "Not numbers, but personal purity is our aim," said the fathers of Methodism. The parading of church statistics is mightily against the grain of spiritual religion. Eyeing numbers greatly hinders the looking after personal purity. The increase of quantity is generally at a loss of quality. Bulk abates preciousness.

The age of church organization and church machinery is not an age noted for elevated and strong personal piety. Machinery looks for engineers and organizations for generals—and not for saints—to run them. The simplest organization may aid purity as well as strength; but beyond that narrow limit, organization swallows up the individual and is careless of personal purity; push, activity, enthusiasm, [and] zeal for an organization come in as the

vicious substitutes for spiritual character. Holiness and all the spiritual graces of hardy culture and slow growth are discarded as too slow and too costly for the progress and rush of the age. By dint of machinery, new organizations, and spiritual weakness, results are vainly expected to be secured which can only be secured by faith, prayer, and waiting on God.

The man and his spiritual character is what God is looking after. If men, holy men, can be turned out by the easy process of church machinery, readier and better than by the old-time processes, we would gladly invest in every new and improved patent; but we do not believe it. We adhere to the old way—the way the holy prophets went, the king's highway of holiness.

An example of this is afforded by the case of William Wilberforce. High in social position, a member of Parliament, the friend of Pitt the famous statesman—he was not called of God to forsake his high social position nor to quit Parliament, but he was called to order his life according to the pattern set by Jesus Christ and to give himself to prayer. To read the story of his life is to be impressed with its holiness and its devotion to the claims of the quiet hours alone with God. His conversion was announced to his friends—to Pitt and others—by letter.

In the beginning of his religious career, he records:

My chief reasons for a day of secret prayer are, (1) That the state of public affairs is very critical and calls for earnest deprecation of the divine displeasure. (2) My station in life is a very difficult one, wherein I am at a loss to know how to act. Direction, therefore, should be specially sought from time to time. (3) I have been graciously supported in difficult situations of a public nature. I have gone out and returned home in safety, and found a kind reception has attended me. I would humbly hope, too, that what I am now doing is a proof that God has not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from me. I am covered with mercies.

The recurrence of his birthday led him again to review his situation and employment. "I find," he wrote,

... that books alienate my heart from God as much as anything. I have been framing a plan of study for myself, but let me remember, but one thing is needful—that if my heart cannot be kept in a spiritual state without so much prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, etc., as are incompatible with study, I must *seek first* the righteousness of God.

All were to be surrendered for spiritual advance. "I fear," we find him saying, . . . that I have not studied the Scriptures enough. Surely in the summer recess I ought to read the Scriptures an hour or two every day, besides prayer, devotional reading and meditation. God will prosper me better if I wait on him. The experience of all good men shows that without constant prayer and watchfulness the life of God in the soul stagnates. Doddridge's morning and evening devotions were serious matters. Colonel Gardiner always spent hours in prayer in the morning before he went forth. Bonnell practiced private devotions largely morning and evening, and repeated Psalms [while] dressing and undressing to raise his mind to heavenly things. I would look up to God to make the means effectual. I fear that my devotions are too much hurried, that I do not read Scripture enough. I must grow in grace; I must love God more; I must feel the power of divine things more. Whether I am more or less *learned* signifies not. Whether even I execute the work which I deem useful is comparatively unimportant. But beware, my soul, of lukewarmness.

The New Year began with the Holy Communion and new vows. "I will press forward," he wrote,

and labor to know God better and love him more. Assuredly I may, because God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and the Holy Spirit will shed abroad the love of God in the heart. O, then, pray, pray; be earnest, press forward, and follow on to know the Lord. Without watchfulness, humiliation, and prayer, the sense of divine things must languish.

To prepare for the future, he said he found nothing more effectual than private prayer and the serious perusal of the New Testament.

And again:

I must put down that I have lately too little time for private devotions. I can sadly confirm Doddridge's remark that when we go on ill [badly] in the closet, we commonly do so everywhere else. I must mend here. I am afraid of getting into what Owen calls the trade of sinning and repenting . . . Lord help me, the shortening of private devotions starves the soul; it grows lean and faint. This must not be. I must redeem more time. I see how lean in spirit I become without full allowance of time for private devotions; I must be careful to be watching unto prayer.

At another time he puts on record:

I must try what I long ago heard was the rule of E——, the great upholsterer—who, when he came from Bond Street to his little villa, always first re-

tired to his closet. I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had but a hurried half hour to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition, that without due measure of private devotions, the soul will grow lean.

To his son, he wrote:

Let me conjure you not to be seduced into neglecting, curtailing, or hurrying over your morning prayers. Of all things, guard against neglecting God in the closet. There is nothing more fatal to the life and power of religion. More solitude and earlier hours—prayer three times a day at least. How much better might I serve, if I cultivated a closer communication with God!

Wilberforce knew the secret of a holy life. Is that not where most of us fail? We are so busy with other things, so immersed even in doing good and in carrying on the Lord's work, that we neglect the quiet seasons of prayer with God, and before we are aware of it, our soul is lean and impoverished.

"One night alone in prayer," says Spurgeon,

might make us new men, changed from poverty of soul to spiritual wealth, from trembling to triumphing. We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Aforetime the crafty shuffler, always bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respect—yet one night in prayer turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince, and robed him with celestial grandeur. From that night, he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of heaven. Could not we, at least now and then—in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a single night for such enriching traffic with the skies? What, have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of divine love? Yet, my brethren, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches—and cannot we do it now and again for the love of God, and the good of souls? Where is our zeal, our gratitude, our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often tarry at Jabbok, and cry with Jacob, as he grasped the angel—

*With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.*

Surely, brethren, if we have given whole days to folly, we can afford a space for heavenly wisdom. Time was when we gave whole nights to chambering and wantonness, to dancing and the world's revelry; we did not tire then; we were chiding the sun that he rose so soon, and wishing the hours would lag awhile

that we might delight in wilder merriment and perhaps deeper sin. Oh, wherefore should we weary in heavenly employments? Why grow we weary when asked to watch with our Lord? Up, sluggish heart—Jesus calls thee! Rise and go forth to meet the Heavenly Friend in the place where he manifests himself.

We can never expect to grow in the likeness of our Lord unless we follow his example and give more time to communion with the Father. A revival of real praying would produce a spiritual revolution.



CHAPTER 9

The Possibilities of True Prayer

Bear up the hands that hang down, by faith and prayer; support the tottering knees. Have you any days of fasting and prayer? Storm the throne of grace and persevere therein, and mercy will come down.

—John Wesley



We must remember that the goal of prayer is the ear of God. Unless that is gained, the prayer has utterly failed. The utterings of it may have kindled devotional feeling in our minds, the hearing of it may have comforted and strengthened the hearts of those with whom we have prayed, but if the prayer has not gained the heart of God, it has failed in its essential purpose.

A mere formalist can always pray so as to please himself. What has he to do, but to open his book and read the prescribed words, or bow his knee and repeat such phrases as suggest themselves to his memory or his fancy? Like the Tartarian Praying Machine,¹ give but the wind and the wheel, and the business is full arranged. So much knee-bending and talking, and the prayer is done. The formalist's prayers are always good, or—rather, always bad—alike. But the living child of God never offers a prayer which pleases himself; his standard is above his attainments; he wonders that God listens to him, and though he knows he will be heard for Christ's sake,

¹ Praying machine: in some areas, Buddhist priests paste written prayers on a wheel, which is then spun by hand, or by using water or wind power. Each time the wheel turns, it is supposed to have the same effect as a person praying each of the written prayers.

yet he accounts it a wonderful instance of condescending mercy that such poor prayers as his should ever reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

—C. H. Spurgeon



It may be said, with emphasis, that no lazy saint prays. Can there be a lazy saint? Can there be a prayerless saint? Does not slack praying cut short sainthood's crown and kingdom? Can there be a cowardly soldier? Can there be a saintly hypocrite? Can there be virtuous vice? It is only when these possibilities are brought into being, that we then can find a prayerless saint.

To go through the motion of praying is a dull business, though not a hard one. To say prayers in a decent, delicate way is not heavy work. But to pray really, to pray till Hell feels the ponderous stroke, to pray till the iron gates of difficulty are opened, till the mountains of obstacles are removed, till the mists are exhaled and the clouds are lifted, and the sunshine of a cloudless day brightens—this is hard work, but it is God's work and man's best labor. Never was the toil of hand, head, and heart less spent in vain than when praying. It is hard to wait and press and pray, and hear no voice, but stay till God answers. The joy of answered prayer is the joy of a travailing mother when a child is born into the world, the joy of a slave whose chains have been burst asunder and to whom new life and liberty have just come.

A bird's-eye view of what has been accomplished by prayer shows what we lost when the dispensation of real prayer was substituted by Pharisaical pretense and sham; it shows, too, how imperative is the need for holy men and women who will give themselves to earnest, Christlike praying.

It is not an easy thing to pray. [In] back of the praying, there must lie all the conditions of prayer. These conditions are possible, but they are not to be seized on in a moment by the prayerless. Present they always may be, to the faithful and holy, but [they] cannot exist in nor be met by a frivolous, negligent, laggard spirit. Prayer does not stand alone. It is not an isolated performance. Prayer stands in closest connection with all the duties of an ardent piety. It is the issuance of a character which is made up of the elements of a vigorous and commanding faith. Prayer honors God, acknowledges his being, exalts his power, adores his providence, secures his aid. A sneering half-rationalism cries out against devotion, that it does nothing but pray. But to pray well, is to do all things well. If it be true that devotion does nothing but pray, then it does nothing at all.

To do nothing but pray fails to do the praying, for the antecedent, co-incident, and subsequent conditions of prayer are but the sum of all the energized forces of a practical, working piety.

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the promises of God. Prayer opens an outlet for the promises, removes the hindrances in the way of their execution, puts them into working order, and secures their gracious ends. More than this, prayer, like faith, obtains promises, enlarges their operation, and adds to the measure of their results. God's promises were to Abraham and to his seed, but many a barren womb, and many a minor obstacle stood in the way of the fulfillment of these promises—but prayer removed them all, made a highway for the promises, added to the facility and speediness of their realization, and by prayer, the promise shone bright and perfect in its execution.

The possibilities of prayer are found in its allying itself with the purposes of God, for God's purposes and man's praying are the combination of all potent and omnipotent forces. More than this, the possibilities of prayer are seen in the fact that it changes the purposes of God. It is in the very nature of prayer to plead and give directions. Prayer is not a negation. It is a positive force. It never rebels against the *will* of God, never comes into conflict with that will—but that it *does* seek to change God's *purpose*, is evident. Christ said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it," and yet he had prayed that very night, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Paul sought to change the purposes of God about the thorn in his flesh. God's purposes were fixed to destroy Israel, and the prayer of Moses changed the purposes of God and saved Israel. In the times of the judges, Israel was apostate and greatly oppressed. They [the Israelites] repented and cried unto God, and he said: "Ye have forsaken me and served other gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more"—but they humbled themselves, [and] put away their strange gods—and God's "soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," and he sent them deliverance by Jephthah.

God sent Isaiah to say to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live;" and Hezekiah prayed, and God sent Isaiah back to say, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years."

"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," was God's message by Jonah. But Nineveh cried mightily to God, and "God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not."

The possibilities of prayer are seen from the diverse conditions it reaches, and the diverse ends it secures. Elijah prayed over a dead child, and it came to life; Elisha did the same thing; Christ prayed at Lazarus's grave, and Lazarus came forth. Peter kneeled down and prayed beside dead Dorcas, and she opened her eyes and sat up, and Peter presented her alive to the distressed company. Paul prayed for Publius, and healed him. Jacob's praying changed Esau's murderous hate into the kisses of the tenderest brotherly embrace. God gave to Rebecca Jacob and Esau because Isaac prayed for her. Joseph was the child of Rachel's prayers. Hannah's praying gave Samuel to Israel. John the Baptist was given to Elizabeth, barren and past age as she was, in answer to the prayer of Zacharias. Elisha's praying brought famine or harvest to Israel; as he prayed, so it was. Ezra's praying carried the Spirit of God in heart-breaking conviction to the entire city of Jerusalem, and brought them, in tears of repentance, back to God. Isaiah's praying carried the shadow of the sun back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz.

In answer to Hezekiah's praying, an angel slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand of Sennacherib's army in one night. Daniel's praying opened to him the vision of prophecy, helped him to administer the affairs of a mighty kingdom, and sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths. The angel was sent to Cornelius, and the Gospel opened through him to the Gentile world, because his "prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God."

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets . . .

. . . of Paul and Peter, and John and the apostles, and the holy company of saints, reformers, and martyrs, who, through praying . . .

. . . subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, [and] turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Prayer puts God in the matter—with commanding force. "Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons," says God, "and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." We are charged in God's Word "always to pray," "in everything by prayer," "continuing instant [urgent] in prayer," to "pray

everywhere," "praying always." The promise is as illimitable as the command is comprehensive. "All things—whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive," "whatever ye shall ask," "if ye shall ask anything." "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "Whatsoever ye ask the Father—he will give it to you." If there is anything not involved in "All things whatsoever," or not found in the phrase "Ask anything," then *these* things may be left out of prayer! Language could not cover a wider range, nor involve more fully all *minutia*. These statements are but samples of the all-comprehending possibilities of prayer under the promises of God, to those who meet the conditions of right praying.

These passages, though, give but a general outline of the immense regions over which prayer extends its sway. Beyond these, the effects of prayer reach and secure good from regions which cannot be traversed by language or thought. Paul exhausted language and thought in praying, but conscious of necessities not covered, and realms of good not reached he covers these impenetrable and undiscovered regions by this general plea,

... unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

The promise is, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

James declares that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." How much, he could not tell, but illustrates it by the power of Old Testament praying, to stir up New Testament saints to imitate, by the fervor and influence of their praying, the holy men of old, and duplicate and surpass the power of their praying. Elijah, he says, was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

In the Revelation of John, the whole lower order of God's creation and his providential government, the church and the angelic world, are in the attitude of waiting on the efficiency of the prayers of the saintly ones on earth to carry on the various interests of earth and Heaven. The angel takes the fire kindled by prayer and casts it earthward, "and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Prayer is the force which creates all these

alarms, stirs, and throes. "Ask of me," says God to his Son, and to the church of his Son, "and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thine possessions."

The men who have done mighty things for God have always been mighty in prayer, have well understood the possibilities of prayer, and made most of the possibilities. The Son of God, the first of all and the mightiest of all, has shown us the all-potent and far-reaching possibilities of prayer. Paul was might for God because he knew how to use, and how to get others to use, the mighty spiritual forces of prayer.

The seraphim—burning, sleepless, adoring—is the figure of prayer. It is resistless in its ardor, devoted and tireless. There are hindrances to prayer that nothing but pure, intense flame can surmount. There are toils and outlays and endurance which nothing but the strongest, most ardent flame can abide. Prayer may be low-tongued, but it cannot be cold-tongued. Its words may be few, but they must be on fire. Its feelings may not be impetuous, but they must be white with heat. It is the effectual, fervent prayer that influences God.

God's house is the house of prayer; God's work is the work of prayer. It is the zeal for God's house and the zeal for God's work that makes God's house glorious, and his work abide.

When the prayer-chambers of saints are closed, or are entered casually or coldly, then church rulers are secular, fleshly, [and] materialized; spiritual character sinks to a low level, and the ministry becomes restrained and enfeebled.

When prayer fails, the world prevails. When prayer fails, the church loses its divine characteristics, its divine power; the church is swallowed up by a proud ecclesiasticism, and the world scoffs at its obvious impotence.



CHAPTER 10

Hindrances to Prayer

I look upon all the four gospels as thoroughly genuine, for there is, in them, the reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person of Jesus, and which was of as divine a kind as ever was seen on earth.

—Goethe



There are no possibilities, no necessity, for prayerless praying; a heartless performance, a senseless routine, a dead habit, a hasty, careless performance—it justifies nothing. Prayerless praying has no life, gives no life; is dead, breathes out death. Not a battle-axe, but a child's toy, for play, not for service. Prayerless praying does not come up to the importance and aims of a recreation. Prayerless praying is only a weight, an *impediment* in the hour of struggle, of intense conflict, a call to retreat in the moment of battle and victory.

Why do we not pray? What are the hindrances to prayer? This is not a curious nor trivial question. It goes not only to the whole matter of our praying, but to the whole matter of our religion. Religion is bound to decline when praying is hindered. That which hinders praying, hinders religion. He who is too busy to pray, will be too busy to live a holy life.

Other duties become pressing and absorbing and crowd out prayer. "Choked to death," would be the coroner's verdict in many cases of dead

praying, if an inquest could be secured on this dire, spiritual calamity. This [busy] way of hindering prayer becomes so natural, so easy, [and] so innocent that it comes on us all unawares. If we will allow our praying to be crowded out, it will always be done. Satan had rather we let the grass grow on the path to our prayer-chamber than anything else. A closed chamber of prayer means "gone out of business religiously," or what is worse, "made an assignment" and carrying on our religion in some other name than God's, and to somebody else's glory. God's glory is only secured in the business of religion by carrying that religion on with a large capital of prayer. The apostles understood this when they declared that their time must not be employed in even the sacred duties of alms-giving; they must give themselves, they said, "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word," prayer being put first with them, and the ministry of the Word having its efficiency and life from prayer.

The process of hindering prayer by crowding [it] out is simple and goes by advancing stages. First, prayer is hurried through. Unrest and agitation, fatal to all devout exercises, come in. Then the time is shortened, [and] relish for the exercise palls. Then it is crowded into a corner and depends on the fragments of time for its exercise. Its value depreciates. The duty has lost its importance. It no longer commands respect nor brings benefit. It has fallen out of estimate, out of heart, out of the habits, out of the life. We cease to pray, and cease to live spiritually.

There is no stay to the desolating floods of worldliness and business and cares, but [except for] prayer. Christ meant this when he charged us to watch and pray. There is no pioneering corps for the Gospel but prayer. Paul knew that, when he declared that "night and day he prayed exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." There is no arriving at a high state of grace without much praying, and no staying in those high altitudes without great praying. Epaphras knew this when he "labored fervently in prayers" for the Colossian church, "that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

The only way to preserve our praying from being hindered is to estimate prayer at its true and great value. Estimate it as Daniel did, who, when he . . .

. . . knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being opened to Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Put praying into the high values as Daniel did, above place, honor, ease, wealth, life. Put praying into the habits as Daniel did. "As he did aforetime," has much in it to give firmness and fidelity in the hour of trial; much in it to remove hindrances, and master opposing circumstances.

One of Satan's wiliest tricks is to destroy the best by the good. Business and other duties are good, but we are so filled with these that they crowd out and destroy the best. Prayer holds the citadel for God, and if Satan can by any means weaken prayer, he is a gainer so far—and when prayer is dead, the citadel is taken. We must keep prayer as the faithful sentinel keeps guard, with sleepless vigilance. We must not keep it half-starved and feeble as a baby, but we must keep it in giant strength. Our prayer-chamber should have our freshest strength, our calmest time—its hours unfettered, without obtrusion, without haste. Private place and plenty of time are the life of prayer. "To kneel upon our knees three times a day and pray and give thanks before God as we did aforetime," is the very heart and soul of religion, and makes men, like Daniel [was], of "an excellent spirit," "greatly beloved in Heaven."

The greatness of prayer, involving as it does the whole man, in the intensest form, is not realized without spiritual discipline. This makes it hard work, and before this exacting and consuming effort, our spiritual sloth or feebleness stands abashed.

The simplicity of prayer, its childlike elements, form a great obstacle to true praying. Intellect gets in the way of the heart. The child spirit only is the spirit of prayer. It is no holiday occupation to make the man a child again. In song, in poetry, in memory he may wish himself a child again, but in prayer he must be a child again in reality. At his mother's knee—artless, sweet, intense, direct, trustful. With no shade of doubt, no temper to be denied. A desire which burns and consumes, which can only be voiced by a cry. It is no easy work to have this childlike spirit of prayer.

If praying were but an hour in the closet, difficulties would face and hinder even that hour—but praying is the whole life preparing for the closet. How difficult it is to cover home and business, all the sweets and all the bitters of life, with the holy atmosphere of the closet! A holy life is the only preparation for prayer. It is just as difficult to pray, as it is to live a holy life. In this we find a wall of exclusion built around our closets; men do not love holy praying, because they do not

love and will not do holy living. Montgomery sets forth the difficulties of true praying when he declares the sublimity and simplicity of prayer.

*Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try.
Prayer is the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.*

This is not only good poetry, but a profound truth as to the loftiness and simplicity of prayer. There are great difficulties in reaching the exalted, angelic strains of prayer. The difficulty of coming down to the simplicity of infant lips is not much less.

Prayer in the Old Testament is called "wrestling." Conflict and skill; strenuous, exhaustive effort are involved. In the New Testament we have the terms "striving, laboring fervently, fervent, effectual, agony"—all indicating intense effort put forth, difficulties overcome. We, in our praises, sing out—

*What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy seat.*

We also have learned that the gracious results secured by prayer, are generally proportioned to the outlay in removing the hindrances which obstruct our soul's high communion with God.

Christ spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not faint. The parable of the importunate widow teaches the difficulties in praying, how they are to be surmounted, and the happy results which follow from valorous praying. Difficulties will always obstruct the way to the closet as long as it remains true,

*That Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

Courageous faith is made stronger and purer by mastering difficulties. These difficulties but couch [direct] the eye of faith to the glorious prize which is to be won by the successful wrestler in prayer. Men must not faint in the contest of prayer, but to this high and holy work they must give themselves, defying the difficulties in the way, and experience more than an angel's happiness in the results. Luther said: "To have prayed well, is to have studied well." More

than that, to have prayed well is to have fought well. To have prayed well is to have lived well. To pray well is to die well.

Prayer is a rare gift, not a popular, ready gift. Prayer is not the fruit of natural talents; it is the product of faith, of holiness, of deeply spiritual character. Men learn to pray as they learn to love. Perfection in simplicity, in humility, in faith—these form its chief ingredients. Novices in these graces are not adepts in prayer. It cannot be seized upon by untrained hands; graduates in heaven's highest school of art can alone touch its finest keys, raise its sweetest, highest notes. Fine material, fine finish are requisite. Master workmen are required, for mere journeymen cannot execute the work of prayer.

The spirit of prayer should rule our spirits and our conduct. The spirit of the prayer-chamber must control our lives, or the closet hour will be dull and sapless. Always praying in spirit; always acting in the spirit of praying—these make our praying strong. The spirit of every moment is that which imparts strength to the closet communion. It is what we are *out* of the closet [that] gives victory or brings defeat to the closet. If the spirit of the world prevails in our non-closet hours, the spirit of the world will prevail in our closet hours, and that will be a vain and idle farce.

We must live for God out of the closet if we would meet God in the closet. We must bless God by praying lives if we would have God's blessing in the closet. We must do God's will in our lives if we would have God's ear in the closet. We must listen to God's voice in public if we would have God listen to our voice in private. God must have our hearts out of the closet, if we would have God's presence in the closet. If we would have God in the closet, God must have us out of the closet. There is no way of praying to God, but by living to God. The closet is not a confessional, simply, but the hour of holy communion and high and sweet intercourse and of intense intercession.

Men would pray better if they lived better. They would get more from God if they lived [in a way] more obedient and well pleasing to God. We would have more strength and time for the divine work of intercession if we did not have to expend so much strength and time settling up old scores and paying our delinquent taxes. Our spiritual liabilities are so greatly in excess of our spiritual assets that our closet time is spent in taking out a decree of bankruptcy instead of being the time of great spiritual wealth for us and for others. Our closets are too much like the sign, "Closed for Repairs."

John said of primitive Christian praying, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." We should note what illimitable grounds were covered, what illimitable gifts were received by their strong praying: "*Whatsoever*"—how comprehensive the range and reception of mighty praying! how suggestive the reasons for the ability to pray and to have prayers answered. Obedience—but more than mere obedience—doing the things which please God well. They went to their closets made strong by their strict obedience and loving fidelity to God in their conduct. Their lives were not only true and obedient, but they were thinking about things above obedience, searching for and doing things to make God glad. These [saints] can come with eager step and radiant countenance to meet their Father in the closet, not simply to be forgiven, but to be approved—and to receive.

It makes much difference whether we come to God as a criminal or a child; to be pardoned or to be approved; to settle scores or to be embraced; for punishment or for favor. Our praying, to be strong, must be buttressed by holy living. The name of Christ must be honored by our lives, before it will honor our intercessions. The life of faith perfects the prayer of faith.

Our lives not only give color to our praying, but they give body to it as well. Bad living makes bad praying. We pray feebly because we live feebly. The stream of praying cannot rise higher than the fountain of living. The closet force is made up of the energy which flows from the confluent streams of living. The feebleness of living throws its faintness into closet homes. We cannot talk to God strongly when we have not lived for God strongly. The closet cannot be made holy to God when the life has not been holy to God. The Word of God emphasizes our conduct as giving value to our praying. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shalt answer; thou shalt cry and he shall say, "Here I am." If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth the finger, and speaking vanity . . ."¹

Men are to pray "lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." We are to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, if we would call on the Father. We cannot divorce praying from conduct. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye

¹ Isaiah 58:9.

may consume it upon your lusts." The injunction of Christ, "Watch and pray," is to cover and guard conduct, that we may come to our closets with all the force [we have] secured by a vigilant guard over our lives.

Our religion breaks down oftenest and most sadly in our conduct. Beautiful theories are marred by ugly lives. The most difficult as well as the most impressive point in piety is to live it. Our praying suffers as much as our religion from bad living. Preachers were charged in primitive times to preach by their lives, or preach not at all. So Christians everywhere ought to be charged to pray by their lives, or pray not at all. Of course, the prayer of repentance is acceptable. But repentance means to quit doing wrong, and learn to do well. A repentance which does not produce a change in conduct is a sham. Praying which does not result in pure conduct is a delusion. We have missed the whole office and virtue of praying if it does not rectify conduct. It is in the very nature of things that we must quit praying, or quit bad conduct. Cold, dead praying may exist with bad conduct, but cold, dead praying is no praying in God's esteem. Our praying advances in power as it rectifies the life. A life growing in its purity and devotion will be a more prayerful life.

The pity is that so much of our praying is without object or aim. It is without purpose. How much praying there is by men and women who never abide in Christ—hasty praying, sweet praying full of sentiment, pleasing praying—but not backed by a life wedded to Christ. Popular praying! How much of this praying is from unsanctified hearts and unhallowed lips! Prayers spring into life under the influence of some great excitement, by some pressing emergency, through some popular clamor, some great peril. But the conditions of prayer are not there. We rush into God's presence and try to link him to our cause, inflame him with our passions, move him by our peril. All things are to be prayed for but with clean hands, with absolute deference to God's will and abiding in Christ. Prayerless praying, by lips and hearts untrained to prayer, by lives out of harmony with Jesus Christ; prayerless praying, which has the form and motion of prayer but is without the true heart of prayer, never moves God to an answer. It is of such praying that James says: "Ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

The two great evils—not asking, and asking in a wrong way. Perhaps the greater evil is wrong asking, for it has in it the show of duty done, of praying when there has been no praying—a deceit, a fraud, a sham. The times of the

most praying are not really the times of the *best* praying. The Pharisees prayed much, but they were actuated by vanity; their praying was the symbol of their hypocrisy, by which they made God's house of prayer a den of robbers. Theirs was praying on state occasions—mechanical, perfunctory, professional, beautiful in *words*, fragrant in sentiment, well ordered, well received by the ears that heard—but utterly devoid of every element of real prayer.

The conditions of prayer are well ordered and clear—abiding in Christ; in his name. One of the first necessities, if we are to grasp the infinite possibilities of prayer, is to get rid of prayerless praying. It is often beautiful in words and in execution; it has the drapery of prayer in rich and costly form, but it lacks the soul of praying. We fall so easily into the habit of prayerless service, of merely filling a program.

If men only prayed on all occasions and in every place where they go through the motion! If there were only holy inflamed hearts [in] back of all these beautiful words and gracious forms! If there were always uplifted hearts in these erect men who are uttering flawless but vain words before God! If there were always reverent bended hearts, when bended knees are uttering words before God to please men's ears!

There is nothing that will preserve the life of prayer—its vigor, sweetness, obligations, seriousness, and value—so much as a deep conviction that prayer is an approach to God, a pleading with God, an asking of God. Reality will then be in it; reverence will then be in the attitude, in the place, and in the air. Faith will draw, kindle, and open. Formality and deadness cannot live in this high and all-serious home of the soul.

Prayerless praying lacks the essential element of true praying; it is not based on desire, and is devoid of earnestness and faith. Desire burdens the chariot of prayer, and faith drives its wheels. Prayerless praying has no burden, because no sense of need; no ardency, because none of the vision, strength, or glow of faith. No mighty pressure to prayer, no holding on to God with the deathless, despairing grasp, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." No utter self-abandon, lost in the throes of a desperate, pertinacious [stubbornly persistent], and consuming plea: "Yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin—if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book;" or "Give me Scotland, or I die." Prayerless praying stakes nothing on the issue, for it has nothing to stake. It comes with empty hands, indeed, but they are listless hands as well as empty.

They have never learned the lesson of empty hands clinging to the cross; this lesson to them has no form nor comeliness.

Prayerless praying has no heart in its praying. The lack of heart deprives praying of its reality, and makes it an empty and unfit vessel. Heart, soul, life must be in our praying; the heavens must feel the force of our crying, and must be brought into oppressed sympathy for our bitter and needy state. A need that oppresses us, and has no relief but in our crying to God, must voice our praying.

Prayerless praying is insincere. It has no honesty at heart. We name in words what we do not want in heart. Our prayers give formal utterance to the things for which our hearts are not only not hungry, but for which they really have no taste. We once heard an eminent and saintly preacher, now in Heaven, come [speak] abruptly and sharply on a congregation that had just risen from prayer, with the question and statement,

What did you pray for? If God should take hold of you and shake you, and demand what you prayed for, you could not tell him, to save your life, what the prayer was that has just died from your lips."

So it always is—prayerless praying has neither memory nor heart. A mere form, a heterogeneous mass, an insipid compound, a mixture thrown together for sound and to fill up, but with neither heart nor aim, is prayerless praying. A dry routine, a dreary drudge, a dull and heavy task is this prayerless praying.

But prayerless praying is much worse than either task or drudge: it divorces praying from living; it utters its words against the world, but with heart and life, runs into the world; it prays for humility, but nurtures pride; prays for self-denial, while indulging the flesh. Nothing exceeds, in gracious results, true praying, but better not to pray at all than to pray prayerless prayers, for they are but sinning, and the worst of sinning is to sin on our knees.

The prayer habit is a good habit, but praying by dint of habit *only* is a very bad habit. This kind of praying is not conditioned after God's order, nor generated by God's power. It is not only a waste, a perversion, and a delusion, but it is a prolific source of unbelief. Prayerless praying gets no results. God is not reached, self is not helped. It is better not to pray at all than to secure no results from praying. Better for the one who prays, better for others. Men hear of the prodigious results which are to be secured by prayer: the matchless good promised in God's Word to prayer. These keen-eyed worldlings or timid little-faith ones mark the great discrepancy between the results promised and

results realized, and are led necessarily to doubt the truth and worth of that which is so big in promise and so beggarly in results. Religion and God are dishonored, doubt and unbelief are strengthened by much asking and no getting.

In contrast with this, what a mighty force *prayerful* praying is. Real prayer helps God and man. God's kingdom is advanced by it. The greatest good comes to man by it. *Prayer can do anything that God can do.* The pity is that we do not believe this as we ought, and we do not put it to the test.



CHAPTER I I

Prayer Opens Up Divine Resources

The deepest need of the church today is not for any material or external thing, but the deepest need is spiritual. Prayerless work will never bring in the kingdom. We neglect to pray in the prescribed way. We seldom enter the closet and shut the door for a season of prayer. Kingdom interests are pressing on us thick and fast, and we must pray. Prayerless giving will never evangelize the world.

—Dr. A. J. Gordon



The great subject of prayer, that comprehensive need of the Christian's life, is intimately bound up in the personal fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is "by the one Spirit we have access unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18), and by the same Spirit, having entered the audience chamber through the "new and living way," we are enabled to pray in the will of God (Rom. 8:15, 26-27; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20-21).

Here is the secret of prevailing prayer: to pray under a direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whose petitions for us and through us, are always according to the divine purpose, and hence certain of answer. "Praying in the Holy Ghost" is but co-operating with the will of God, and such prayer is always victorious. How many Christians there are who cannot pray, and who seek by effort, resolve, joining prayer circles, etc., to cultivate in themselves the "holy art of intercession" — and all to no purpose. Here,

for them and for all, is the only secret of a real prayer life—"Be filled with the Spirit," who is "the Spirit of grace and supplication."—Rev. J. Stuart Holden, M.A.



The preceding chapter closed with the statement that prayer can do anything that God can do. It is a tremendous statement to make, but it is a statement borne out by history and experience. If we are abiding in Christ—and if we abide in him we are living in obedience to his holy will—and approach God in his name, then there lie open before us the infinite resources of the divine treasure house.

The man who truly prays, gets from God many things denied to the prayerless man. The aim of all real praying is to get the thing prayed for, as the child's cry for bread has for its end the getting of bread. This view removes prayer clean out of the sphere of religious performances. Prayer is not acting a part, or going through religious motions. Prayer is neither official, nor formal, nor ceremonial—but direct, hearty, intense. Prayer is not religious work which must be gone through, and avails because well done. Prayer is the helpless and needy child, crying to the compassion of the Father's heart and the bounty and power of a Father's hand. The answer is as sure to come as the Father's heart can be touched and the Father's hand moved.

The object of asking is to receive. The aim of seeking is to find. The purpose of knocking is to arouse attention and get in, and this is Christ's iterated and reiterated asseveration—that the prayer without doubt will be answered, its end without doubt secured. Not by some round-about way, but by getting the very thing asked for.

The value of prayer does not lie in the number of prayers, or the length of prayers, but its value is found in the great truth that we are privileged, by our relations to God, to unburden our desires and make our requests known to God, and he will relieve [us] by granting our petitions. The child asks because the parent is in the habit of granting the child's requests. As the children of God, we need something and we need it badly, and we go to God for it. Neither the Bible nor the child of God knows anything of that half-infidel declaration, that we are to answer our own prayers. *God answers prayer.* The true Christian does not pray to stir himself up, but his prayer is the stirring up of himself to take hold of God. The heart of faith knows nothing of that specious

skepticism which stays the steps of prayer and chills its ardor, by whispering that prayer does not affect God.

D. L. Moody used to tell a story of a little child whose father and mother had died, and who was taken into another family. The first night she asked whether she could pray as she used to do. They said: "Oh, yes!" So she knelt down and prayed as her mother had taught her; and when that was ended, she added a little prayer of her own: "O God, make these people as kind to me as father and mother were." Then she paused and looked up, as if expecting the answer, and then added: "Of course you will!" How sweetly simple was that little one's faith! She expected God to answer, and "do"—and "of course" she got her request—and that is the spirit in which God invites us to approach him.

In contrast to that incident, is the story told of the quaint Yorkshire class leader, Daniel Quorm, who was visiting a friend. One forenoon he came to the friend and said, "I am sorry you have met with such a great disappointment."

"Why, no," said the man, "I have not met with any disappointment."

"Yes," said Daniel, "you were expecting something remarkable today."

"What do you mean?" said the friend.

"Why, you prayed that you might be kept sweet and gentle all day long. And, by the way things have been going, I see you have been greatly disappointed."

"Oh," said the man, "I thought you meant something particular."

Prayer is mighty in its operations, and God never disappoints those who put their trust and confidence in him. They may have to wait long for the answer, and they may not live to see it, but the prayer of faith never misses its object.

"A friend of mine in Cincinnati had preached his sermon and sank back in his chair, when he felt impelled to make another appeal," says Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman.

A boy at the back of the church lifted his hand. My friend left the pulpit and went down to him, and said, "Tell me about yourself." The boy said, "I live in New York. I am a prodigal. I have disgraced my father's name and broken my mother's heart. I ran away and told them I would never come back until I became a Christian or they brought me home dead." That night there

went from Cincinnati a letter telling his father and mother that their boy had turned to God.

Seven days later, in a black-bordered envelope, a reply came which read: "My dear boy, when I got the news that you had received Jesus Christ, the sky was overcast; your father was dead." Then the letter went on to tell how the father had prayed for his prodigal boy with his last breath, and concluded, "You are a Christian tonight, because your old father would not let you go."

A fourteen-year-old boy was given a task by his father. It so happened that a group of boys came along just then and wiled the boy away with them, and so the work went undone. But the father came home that evening and said, "Frank, did you do the work that I gave you?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank. He told an untruth, and his father knew it, but said nothing. It troubled the boy, but he went to bed as usual.

Next morning his mother said to him, "Your father did not sleep all last night."

"Why didn't he sleep?" asked Frank.

His mother said, "He spent the whole night praying for you."

This sent the arrow into his heart. He was deeply convicted of his sin, and knew no rest until he had got right with God. Long afterward, when the boy became Bishop Warne, he said that his decision for Christ came from his father's prayer that night. He saw his father, keeping his lonely and sorrowful vigil, praying for his boy, and it broke his heart. Said he, "I can never be sufficiently grateful to him for that prayer."

An evangelist, much used of God, has put on record that he commenced a series of meetings in a little church of about twenty members who were very cold and dead, and much divided. A little prayer-meeting was kept up by two or three women. "I preached, and closed at eight o'clock," he says. "There was no one to speak or pray. The next evening [only] one man spoke.

The next morning I rode six miles to a minister's study, and kneeled in prayer. I went back, and said to the little church: "If you can make out enough to board me, I will stay until God opens the windows of Heaven. God has promised to bless these means, and I believe he will."

Within ten days there were so many anxious souls that I met one hundred and fifty of them at a time in an inquiry meeting, while Christians were

praying in another house of worship. Several hundred, I think, were converted. It is safe to believe God.

A mother asked the late John B. Gough to visit her son, to win him to Christ. Gough found the young man's mind full of skeptical notions, and impervious to argument. Finally, the young man was asked to pray, just once, for light. He replied: "I do not know anything perfect to whom or to which I could pray." "How about your mother's love?" said the orator. "Isn't that perfect? Hasn't she always stood by you, and been ready to take you in, and care for you, when even your father had really kicked you out?" The young man choked with emotion, and said, "Y-e-s, sir; that is so." "Then pray to Love—it will help you. Will you promise?" He promised. That night the young man prayed in the privacy of his room. He kneeled down, closed his eyes, and struggling a moment, uttered the words: "Oh, Love." Instantly, as by a flash of lightning, the old Bible text came to him: "God is love," and he said, brokenly, "O God!" Then another flash of divine truth, and a voice said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," and there, instantly, he exclaimed, "O Christ, thou incarnation of divinest love, show me light and truth." It was all over. He was in the light of the most perfect peace. He ran downstairs (adds the narrator of this incident) and told his mother that he was saved. That young man is today an eloquent minister of Jesus Christ.

A water famine was threatened in Hakodate, Japan. Miss Dickerson, of the Methodist Episcopal Girls' School, saw the water supply growing less daily, and in one of the fall months, appealed to the Board in New York for help. There was no money on hand, and nothing was done. Miss Dickerson inquired the cost of putting down an artesian well, but found the expense too great to be undertaken. On the evening of December 31st, when the water was almost exhausted, the teachers and the older pupils met to pray for water, though they had no idea how their prayer was to be answered. A couple of days later a letter was received in the New York office which ran something like this:

Philadelphia, January 1st. It is six o'clock in the morning of New Year's Day. All the other members of the family are asleep, but I was awakened with a strange impression that some one, somewhere, is in need of money which the Lord wants me to supply.

Enclosed was a check for an amount which just covered the cost of the artesian well and the piping of the water into the school buildings.

"I have seen God's hand stretched out to heal among the heathen in as mighty wonder-working power as in apostolic times," once said a well-known minister to the writer [Bounds].

I was preaching to two thousand famine-orphaned girls, at Kedgaum, India, at Ramabai's Mukti (salvation) Mission. A swarm of serpents as venomous and deadly as the reptile that smote Paul, suddenly raided the walled grounds, "sent of Satan," Ramabai said, and several of her most beautiful and faithful Christian girls were smitten by them, two of them bitten twice. I saw four of the very flower of her flock in convulsions at once, unconscious and apparently in the agonies of death. Ramabai believes the Bible with an implicit and obedient faith. There were three of us missionaries there. She said: "We will do just what the Bible says: I want you to minister for their healing, according to James 1:14-18." She led the way into the dormitory where her girls were lying in spasms, and we laid our hands upon their heads and prayed, and anointed them with oil in the name of the Lord. Each of them was healed as soon as anointed, and sat up and sang, with faces shining. That miracle and marvel among the heathen mightily confirmed the word of the Lord, and was a profound and overpowering proclamation of God.

Some years ago, the record of a wonderful work of grace in connection with one of the stations of the China Inland Mission attracted a good deal of attention. Both the number and spiritual character of the converts had been far greater than at other stations where the consecration of the missionaries had been just as great at the more fruitful place.

This rich harvest of souls remained a mystery until Hudson Taylor, on a visit to England, discovered the secret. At the close of one of his addresses, a gentleman came forward to make his acquaintance. In the conversation which followed, Mr. Taylor was surprised at the accurate knowledge the man possessed concerning this inland China station. "But how is it," Mr. Taylor asked, "that you are so conversant with the conditions of that work?" "Oh!" he replied, "the missionary there and I are old college-mates; for years we have regularly corresponded; he has sent me names of enquirers and converts, and these I have daily taken to God in prayer."

At last the secret was found! A praying man at home, praying definitely, praying daily, for specific cases among the heathen. That is the real intercessory missionary.

Hudson Taylor himself, as all the world knows, was a man who knew how to pray, and whose praying was blessed with fruitful answers. In the story of his life, told by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, we find page after page aglow with answered prayer. On his way out to China for the first time in 1853, when he was only twenty-one years of age, he had a definite answer to prayer that was a great encouragement to his faith.

They had just come through the Dampier Strait, but were not yet out of sight of the islands. Usually a breeze would spring up after sunset and last until about dawn. The utmost use was made of it, but during the day they lay still with flapping sails, often drifting back and losing a good deal of the advantage gained at night.

The story continues in Hudson Taylor's own words:

This happened notably on one occasion when we were in dangerous proximity to the north of New Guinea. Saturday night had brought us to a point some thirty miles off the land, and during the Sunday morning service, which was held on deck, I could not fail to see that the Captain looked troubled and frequently went over to the side of the ship. When the service was ended, I learnt from him the cause. A four-knot current was carrying us toward some sunken reefs, and we were already so near that it seemed improbable that we should get through the afternoon in safety. After dinner, the long-boat was put out and all hands endeavored, without success, to turn the ship's head from the shore [by pulling it with the rowed long-boat].

After standing together on the deck for some time in silence, the Captain said to me: "Well, we have done everything that can be done. We can only await the result."

A thought occurred to me, and I replied: "No, there is one thing we have not done yet."

"What is that?" he queried.

"Four of us on board are Christians. Let us each retire to his own cabin, and in agreed prayer ask the Lord to give us immediately a breeze. He can as easily send it now as at sunset."

The Captain complied with this proposal. I went and spoke to the other two men, and after prayer with the carpenter, we all four retired to wait upon God. I had a good but very brief season in prayer, and then felt so satisfied that our

request was granted that I could not continue asking, and very soon went up again on deck. The first officer, a godless man, was in charge. I went over and asked him to let down the clews, or corners of the mainsail, which had been drawn up in order to lessen the useless flapping of the sail against the rigging.

"What would be the good of that?" he answered roughly.

I told him we had been asking a wind from God; that it was coming immediately; and we were so near the reef by this time that there was not a minute to lose.

With an oath and a look of contempt, he said he would rather see a wind than hear of it.

But while he was speaking, I watched his eye, following it up to the royal [mast], and there, sure enough, the corner of the topmost sail was beginning to tremble in the breeze.

"Don't you see the wind is coming? Look at the royal!" I exclaimed.

"No, it is only a cat's paw," he rejoined (a mere puff of wind).

"Cat's paw or not," I cried, "pray let down the mainsail and give us the benefit."

This he was not slow to do. In another minute the heavy tread of the men on deck brought up the Captain from his cabin to see what was the matter. The breeze had indeed come! In a few minutes we were ploughing our way at six or seven knots an hour through the water . . . and though the wind was sometimes unsteady, we did not altogether lose it until after passing the Pelew Islands.

"Thus God encouraged me," adds this praying saint,

. . . ere landing on China's shores, to bring every variety of need to him in prayer, and to expect that he would honor the name of the Lord Jesus and give the help each emergency required.

In an address at Cambridge some time ago (reported in "The Life of Faith," April 3rd, 1912), Mr. S. D. Gordon told in his own inimitable way the story of a man in his own country, to illustrate from real life the fact of the reality of prayer, and that it is not mere talking.

"This man," said Mr. Gordon,

... came of an old New England family, [and] a bit farther back, an English family. He was a giant in size, and a keen man mentally, and a university-trained man. He had gone out west to live, and represented a prominent district in our House of Congress, answering to your House of Commons. He was a prominent leader there. He was reared in a Christian family, but he was a skeptic, and used to lecture against Christianity. He told me he was fond, in his lectures, of proving, as he thought, conclusively, that there was no God. That was the type of his infidelity.

One day he told me he was sitting in the Lower House of Congress. It was at the time of a Presidential election, and when party feeling ran high. One would have thought that was the last place where a man would be likely to think about spiritual things. He said: "I was sitting in my seat in that crowded House and that heated atmosphere, when a feeling came to me that the God whose existence I thought I could successfully disprove, was just there above me, looking down on me, and that he was displeased with me, and with the way I was doing. I said to myself, 'This is ridiculous, I guess I've been working too hard. I'll go and get a good meal and take a long walk and shake myself, and see if that will take this feeling away.'"

He got his extra meal, took a walk, and came back to his seat, but the impression would not be shaken off that God was there and was displeased with him. He went for a walk, day after day, but could never shake the feeling off. Then he went back to his constituency in his state, he said, to arrange matters there. He had the ambition to be the Governor of his state, and his party was the dominant party in the state, and, as far as such things could be judged, he was in the line to become Governor there, in one of the most dominant states of our Central West.

He said: "I went home to fix that thing up as far as I could, and to get ready for it. But I had hardly reached home and exchanged greetings, when my wife, who was an earnest Christian woman, said to me that a few of them had made a little covenant of prayer, that I might become a Christian." He did not want her to know the experience that he had just been going through, and so he said as carelessly as he could, "When did this thing begin, this praying of yours?" She named the date. Then he did some very quick thinking, and he knew, as he thought back, that it was the day on the calendar when that strange impression came to him for the first time.

He said to me: "I was tremendously shaken. I wanted to be honest. I was perfectly honest in not believing in God, and I thought I was right. But if what she said was true, then merely as a lawyer sifting his evidence in a case, it would be good evidence that there was really something in their prayer. I was terrifically shaken, and wanted to be honest, and did not know what to do. That same night I went to a little Methodist chapel, and if somebody had known how to talk with me, I think I should have accepted Christ that night." Then he said that the next night he went back again to that chapel, where meetings were being held each night, and there he kneeled at the altar, and yielded his great strong will to the will of God. Then he said, "I knew I was to preach," and he is preaching still in a Western State.

That is half of the story. I also talked with his wife—I wanted to put the two halves together, so as to get the bit of teaching in it all—and she told me this. She had been a Christian—what you call a nominal Christian—a strange confusion of terms. Then there came a time when she was led into a full surrender of her life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then she said, "At once, there came a great intensifying of desire that my husband might be a Christian, and we made that little compact to pray for him each day until he became a Christian. That night I was kneeling at my bedside before going to rest, praying for my husband, praying very earnestly—and then a voice said to me, 'Are you willing for the results that will come if your husband is converted?'" The little message was so very distinct that she said she was frightened; she had never had such an experience. But she went on praying still more earnestly, and again there came the quiet voice, 'Are you willing for the consequences?' And again there was a sense of being startled, frightened. But she still went on praying, and wondering what this meant, and a third time the quiet voice came more quietly than ever as she described it, "Are you willing for the consequences?"

Then she told me she said with great earnestness, "O God, I am willing for anything thou dost think good, if only my husband may know thee, and become a true Christian man." She said that, instantly, when that prayer came from her lips, there came into her heart a wonderful sense of peace, a great peace that she could not explain, a "peace that passeth understanding," and from that moment—it was the very night of the covenant, the night when her husband had that first strange experience—the assurance never left her that he would accept Christ. But all those weeks she prayed with the firm assurance that the result was coming.

What were the consequences? They were of a kind that I think no one would think small. She was the wife of a man in a very prominent political position; she was the wife of a man who was in the line of becoming the first official of his state, and she [would have been] officially the first lady socially of that state, with all the honor that that social standing would imply. Now she is the wife of a Methodist preacher, with her home changed every two or three years. She [is] going from this place to that, [in] a very different social position, and having a very different income that she would otherwise have had. Yet I never met a woman who had more of the wonderful peace of God in her heart and of the light of God in her face, than that woman.

And Mr. Gordon's comment on that incident is this:

Now, you can see at once that there was no change in the purpose of God through that prayer. The prayer *worked out* his purpose; it did not change it. But the woman's surrender gave the opportunity of working out the will that God wanted to work out. If we might give ourselves to him and learn his will, and use all our strength in learning his will and bending to his will, then we would begin to pray, and there is simply nothing that could resist the tremendous power of the prayer. Oh, for more men who will be simple enough to get in touch with God, and give him the mastery of the whole life, and learn his will, and then give themselves, as Jesus gave himself, to the sacred service of intercession!

To the man or woman who is acquainted with God and who knows how to pray, there is nothing remarkable in the answers that come. They are sure of being heard, since they ask in accordance with what they know to be the mind and the will of God. Dr. William Burr, Bishop of Europe in the Methodist Episcopal church, tells that a few years ago, when he visited their Boys' School in Vienna, he found that, although the year was not up, all available funds had been spent. He hesitated to make a special appeal to his friends in America. He counseled with the teachers. They took the matter to God in earnest and continued prayer, believing that he would grant their request. Ten days later, Bishop Burr was in Rome, and there came to him a letter from a friend in New York, which read substantially thus:

As I went to my office on Broadway one morning (and the date was the very one on which the teachers were praying), a voice seemed to tell me that you

were in need of funds for the Boys' School in Vienna. I very gladly enclose a check for the work.

The check was for the amount needed. There had been no human communication between Vienna and New York. But while they were yet speaking, God answered them.

Some time ago there appeared in an English religious weekly the report of an incident narrated by a well-known preacher in the course of an address to children. For the truth of the story, he was able to vouch. A child lay sick in a country cottage, and her younger sister heard the doctor say, as he left the house, "Nothing but a miracle can save her." The little girl went to her money-box, took out the few coins it contained, and in perfect simplicity of heart, went to shop after shop in the village street, asking, "Please, I want to buy a miracle."

From each she came away disappointed. Even the local chemist had to say, "My dear, we don't sell miracles here." But outside his door, two men were talking, and had overheard the child's request. One was a great doctor from a London hospital, and he asked her to explain what she wanted. When he understood the need, he hurried with her to the cottage, examined the sick girl, and said to the mother: "It is true—only a miracle can save her, and it must be performed at once." He got his instruments, performed the operation, and the patient's life was saved.

D. L. Moody gives this illustration of the power of prayer:

While in Edinburgh, a man was pointed out to me by a friend, who said: "That man is chairman of the Edinburgh Infidel Club."

I went and sat beside him and said, "My friend, I am glad to see you in our meeting. Are you concerned about your welfare?"

"I do not believe in any hereafter."

"Well, just get down on your knees and let me pray for you."

"No, I do not believe in prayer."

I knelt beside him as he sat, and prayed. He made a great deal of sport of it. A year after, I met him again. I took him by the hand and said: "Hasn't God answered my prayer yet?"

"There is no God. If you believe in one who answers prayers, try your hand on me."

"Well, a great many are now praying for you, and God's time will come, and I believe you will be saved yet."

Some time afterwards I got a letter from a leading barrister in Edinburgh, telling me that my infidel friend had come to Christ, and that seventeen of his club men had followed his example.

I did not know *how* God would answer prayer, but I knew he would answer. Let us come boldly to God.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells a vivid story of a storm at sea. The passengers below were greatly alarmed, as [because] the waves dashed over the vessel. At last one of them, against orders, crept to the deck, and came to the pilot, who was lashed to the wheel, which he was turning without flinching. The pilot caught sight of the terror-stricken man, and gave him a reassuring smile. Below went the passenger, and comforted the others by saying, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well."

That is how we feel when, through the gateway of prayer, we find our way into the Father's presence. We see his face, and we know that all is well, since his hand is on the helm of events, and "even the winds and the waves obey him." When we live in fellowship with him, we come with confidence into his presence, asking in the full confidence of receiving and meeting with the justification of our faith.



CHAPTER 12

Prayer Undergirds Revivals

Let your hearts be much set on revivals of religion. Never forget that the churches have hitherto existed and prospered by revivals; and that if they are to exist and prosper in time to come, it must be by the same cause which has from the first been their glory and defense.

—Joel Hawes



If any minister can be satisfied without conversions, he shall have no conversions.

—C. H. Spurgeon



I do not believe that my desires for a revival were ever half so strong as they ought to be; nor do I see how a minister can help being in a "constant fever" when his Master is dishonored and souls are destroyed in so many ways.

—Edward Payson



An aged saint once came to the pastor at night and said: "We are about to have a revival." He was asked why he knew so. His answer was, "I went into the stable to take care of my cattle two hours ago, and there the Lord has kept me in prayer until just now. And I feel that we are going to be revived." It was the commencement of a revival.

—H. C. Fish



It has been said that the history of revivals is the history of religion, and no one can study their history without being impressed with their mighty

influence upon the destiny of the race. To look back over the progress of the divine kingdom upon earth, is to review revival periods which have come like refreshing showers upon dry and thirsty ground, making the desert to blossom as the rose, and bringing new eras of spiritual life and activity, just when the church had fallen under the influence of the apathy of the times, and needed to be aroused to a new sense of her duty and responsibility. "From one point of view, and that not the least important," writes Principal Lindsay, in *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*,

... the history of the church flows on from one time of revival to another, and whether we take the awakenings in the old Catholic, the mediaeval, or the modern church, these have always been the work of men specially gifted with the power of seeing and declaring the secrets of the deepest Christian life, and the effect of their work has always been proportionate to the spiritual receptivity of the generation they have spoken to.

As God from the beginning has wrought prominently through revivals, there can be no denial of the fact that revivals are a part of the divine plan. The kingdom of our Lord has been advanced in large measure by special seasons of gracious and rapid accomplishment of the work of conversion, and it may be inferred, therefore, that the means through which God has worked in other times will be employed in our time to produce similar results. "The quiet conversion of one sinner after another, under the ordinary ministry of the Gospel," says one writer on the subject . . .

... must always be regarded with feelings of satisfaction and gratitude by the ministers and disciples of Christ; but a periodic manifestation of the simultaneous conversion of thousands is also to be desired, because of its adaptation to afford a visible and impressive demonstration that God has made that same Jesus, who was rejected and crucified, both Lord and Christ; and that, in virtue of his divine mediatorship, he has assumed the royal scepter of universal supremacy, and "must reign till all his enemies be made his footstool." It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that, from time to time, he will repeat that which, on the day of Pentecost, formed the conclusive and crowning evidence of his messiahship and sovereignty; and, by so doing, startle the slumbering souls of careless worldlings, gain the attentive ear of the unconverted, and, in a remarkable way, break in upon those brilliant dreams of earthly glory, grandeur, wealth, power and happiness, which the rebellious and God-forgetting multitude so fondly cherish. Such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit forms at

once a demonstrative proof of the completeness and acceptance of his once offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin, and a prophetic "earnest" [advance deposit] of the certainty that he "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation," to judge the world in righteousness.

And that revivals are to be expected—proceeding, as they do, from the right use of the appropriate means—is a fact which needs not a little emphasis in these days, when the material is exalted at the expense of the spiritual, and when ethical standards are supposed to be supreme. That a revival is not a miracle was powerfully taught by Charles G. Finney. There might, he said, be a miracle among its antecedent causes, or there might not. The apostles employed miracles simply as a means by which they arrested attention to their message, and established its divine authority. "But . . ." [he continues,]

. . . the miracle was not the revival. The miracle was one thing; the revival that followed it was quite another thing. The revivals in the apostles' days were *connected* with miracles, but they were not miracles.

All revivals are dependent upon God, but in revivals, as in other things, he invites and requires the assistance of man, and the full result is obtained when there is cooperation between the divine and the human. In other words, to employ a familiar phrase, God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone. God and man unite for the task, the response of the divine being invariably in proportion to the desire and the effort of the human.

This cooperation, then, being necessary, what is the duty which we, as co-workers with God, require [need] to undertake? First of all, and most important of all—the point which we desire particularly to emphasize—we must give ourselves to prayer. "Revivals," as Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman reminds us,

. . . are born in prayer. When Wesley prayed, England was revived; when Knox prayed, Scotland was refreshed; when the Sunday School teachers of Tannybrook prayed, 11,000 young people were added to the church in a year. Whole nights of prayer have always been succeeded by whole days of soul-winning.

When D. L. Moody's church in Chicago lay in ashes, he went over to England in 1872—not to preach, but to listen to others preach, while his new church was being built. One Sunday morning, he was prevailed upon to preach in a London pulpit. But somehow the spiritual atmosphere was lacking. He

confessed afterwards that he never had such a hard time preaching in his life. Everything was perfectly dead, and, as he vainly tried to preach, he said to himself, "What a fool I was to consent to preach! I came here to listen, and here I am preaching." Then the awful thought came to him that he had to preach again at night, and only the fact that he had given the promise to do so kept him faithful to the engagement. But when Mr. Moody entered the pulpit at night, and faced the crowded congregation, he was conscious of a new atmosphere. "The powers of an unseen world seemed to have fallen upon the audience." As he drew towards the close of his sermon, he became emboldened to give out an invitation, and as he concluded, he said, "If there is a man or woman here who will tonight accept Jesus Christ, please stand up." At once about 500 people rose to their feet. Thinking that there must be some mistake, he asked the people to be seated, and then, in order that there might be no possible misunderstanding, he repeated the invitation, couching it in even more definite and difficult terms. Again the same number rose. Still thinking that something must be wrong, Mr. Moody, for the second time, asked the standing men and women to be seated, and then he invited all who really meant to accept Christ to pass into the vestry. Fully 500 people did as requested, and that was the beginning of a revival in that church and neighborhood, which brought Mr. Moody back from Dublin, a few days later, that he might assist the wonderful work of God.

The sequel, however, must be given, or our purpose in relating the incident will be defeated. When Mr. Moody preached at the morning service, there was a woman in the congregation who had an invalid sister. On her return home, she told the invalid that the preacher had been a Mr. Moody from Chicago, and on hearing this, she [the sister] turned pale. "What!?" she said . . .

. . . Mr. Moody from Chicago? I read about him some time ago in an American paper, and I have been praying [to] God to send him to London, and to our church. If I had known he was going to preach this morning, I would have eaten no breakfast. I would have spent the whole time in prayer. Now, sister, go out of the room, lock the door, send me no dinner; no matter who comes, don't let them see me. I am going to spend the whole afternoon in prayer.

And so while Mr. Moody stood in the pulpit that had been like an ice-chamber in the morning, the bedridden saint was holding him up before God, and God, who ever delights to answer prayer, poured out his Spirit in mighty power.

The God of revivals, who answered the prayer of his child for Mr. Moody, is willing to hear and to answer the faithful, believing prayers of his people to-day. Wherever God's conditions are met, there, the revival is sure to fall. Professor Thomas Nicholson of Cornell College, U.S.A., relates an experience on his first circuit¹ that impresses anew the old lesson of the place of prayer in the work of God.

There had not been a revival on that circuit in years, and things were not spiritually hopeful. During more than four weeks, the pastor had preached faithfully, visited from house to house, in stores, shops, and out-of-the-way places, and had done everything he could. The fifth Monday night saw many of the official members at lodges, but only a corporal's guard at the church.

From that meeting the pastor went home, cast down, but not in despair. He resolved to spend that night in prayer.

Locking the door, he took Bible and hymn book, and began to inquire more diligently of the Lord, though the meetings had been the subject of hours of earnest prayer. Only God knows the anxiety and the faithful, prayerful study of that night. Near the dawn, a great peace and a full assurance came that God would surely bless the plan which had been decided upon, and a text was chosen which he felt sure was of the Lord. Dropping upon the bed, the pastor slept about two hours, then rose, hastily breakfasted, and went nine miles to the far side of the circuit to visit some sick people. All day the assurance increased.

Toward night, a pouring rain set in, the roads were heavy, and we reached home, wet, supperless, and a little late, only to find no fire in the church, the lights unlit, and no signs of service. The janitor had concluded that the rain would prevent the service. We changed the order,² rang the bell, and prepared for war. Three young men formed the congregation, but in that "full assurance," the pastor delivered the message which had been prayed out on the preceding night, as earnestly and as fully as if the house had been crowded, then made a personal appeal to each young man in turn. Two yielded, and testified before the meeting closed.

The tired pastor went to a sweet rest, and next morning, rising a little later than usual, learned that one of the young men was going from store to store

¹ Circuit: a group of nearby churches that shared a minister.

² "Changed the order"—set up for the service: perhaps changed the posted hymn numbers, etc.

throughout the town telling of his wonderful deliverance, and exhorting the people to salvation. Night after night, conversions occurred, until, in two weeks, we heard 144 people testify in forty-five minutes. All three points of that circuit saw a blaze of revival that winter, and family after family came into the church, unto the membership was more than trebled.

Out of that meeting, one convert is a successful pastor in the Michigan Conference, another is the wife of one of the choicest of our pastors, and a third was in the ministry for a number of years, and then went to another denomination, where he is faithful unto this day. Probably none of the members ever knew of the pastor's night of prayer. But he verily believes that God somehow does [things] for the man who thus prays, what he does not do for the man who does not pray, and he is certain that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

All the true revivals have been born in prayer. When God's people become so concerned about the state of religion that they lie on their faces day and night in earnest supplication, the blessing will be sure to fail.

It is the same all down the ages. Every revival of which we have any record has been bathed in prayer. Take, for example, the wonderful revival in Shotts [Scotland] in 1630. The fact that several of the then persecuted ministers would take a part in solemn convocation having become generally known, a vast concourse of godly persons assembled on this occasion from all quarters of the country, and *several days were spent in social prayer*, preparatory to the service. In the evening, instead of retiring to rest, the multitude divided themselves into little bands and *spent the whole night in supplication and praise*. The Monday was consecrated to thanksgiving, a practice not then common, and proved the great days of the feast. After much entreaty, John Livingston, chaplain to the Countess of Wigtown, a young man and not ordained, agreed to preach. He *had spent the night in prayer and conference*—but as the hour of assembling approached, his heart quailed at the thought of addressing so many aged and experienced saints, and he actually fled from the duty he had undertaken. But just as the kirk [church] of Shotts was vanishing from his view, those words—"Was I ever a barren wilderness or a land of darkness?"—were borne in upon his mind with such force as compelled him to return to the work.

He took for his text Ezekiel 36:25–26, and discoursed with great power for about two hours. *Five hundred conversions* were believed to have occurred under that one sermon, thus prefaced by prayer.

It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale [Scotland], so that many of the most eminent Christians of that country could date their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case, from that day.

Of Richard Baxter it has been said that,

. . . he stained his study walls with praying breath; and after becoming thus anointed with the unction of the Holy Ghost, he sent a river of living water over Kidderminster.

Whitfield once thus prayed, “O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul.” After much closet pleading, “he once went to the Devil’s fair and took more than a thousand souls out of the paw of the lion in a single day.”

Mr. Finney says:

I once knew a minister who had a revival fourteen winters in succession. I did not know how to account for it till I saw one of his members get up in a prayer meeting and make a confession. “Brethren,” he said, “I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight for the descent of the Holy Ghost among us. And now, brethren,” (and he began to weep) “I confess that I have neglected it for two or three weeks.” The secret was out. That minister had a praying church.

And so we might go on, multiplying illustration upon illustration to show the place of prayer in revival, and to demonstrate that every mighty movement of the Spirit of God had its source in the prayer-chamber. The lesson of it all is this—that as workers together with God, we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions which prevail around us today. Are we concerned about the coldness of the church? Do we grieve over the lack of conversions? Does our soul go out to God in midnight cries for the outpouring of his Spirit?

If not, part of the blame lies at our door. If we do *our* part, God will do *his*. Around us is a world lost in sin, above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links Heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work.

And so the old cry comes to us with insistent voice, “Pray, brethren, pray.”



CHAPTER 13

Christ Commanded Us to Pray

Lord Jesus, cause me to know in my daily experience, the glory and sweetness of thy name, and then teach me how to use it in my prayer, so that I may be even like Israel, a prince prevailing with God. Thy name is my passport, and secures me access; thy name is my plea, and secures me answer; thy name is my honor and secures me glory. Blessed Name, thou art honey in my mouth, music in my ear, Heaven in my heart, and all in all to my being!

— C. H. Spurgeon



I do not mean that every prayer we offer is answered exactly as we desire it to be. Were this the case, it would mean that we would be dictating to God, and prayer would degenerate into a mere system of begging. Just as an earthly father knows what is best for his children's welfare, so does God take into consideration the particular needs of his human family, and meets them out of his wonderful storehouse. If our petitions are in accordance with his will, and if we seek his glory in the asking, the answers will come in ways that will astonish us, and fill our hearts with songs of thanksgiving. God is a rich and bountiful Father, and he does not forget his children, nor withhold from them anything which it would be to their advantage to receive.

— J. Kennedy Maclean



The example of our Lord in the matter of prayer is one which his followers might well copy. Christ prayed much, and he taught much about prayer.

His life and his works, as well as his teaching, are illustrations of the nature and necessity of prayer. He lived and labored to answer prayer. But the necessity of importunity in prayer was the emphasized point in his teaching about prayer. He taught not only that men *must pray*, but that they must *persevere in prayer*.

He taught, in command and precept, the idea of energy and earnestness in praying. He gives to our efforts, graduation and climax. We are to ask, but to the asking we must add seeking, and seeking must pass into the full force of effort in knocking. The pleading soul must be aroused to effort by God's silence. Denial, instead of abating or abashing, must arouse its latent energies and kindle anew its highest ardor.

In the Sermon on the Mount, in which he lays down the cardinal duties of his religion, he not only gives prominence to prayer in general, and secret prayer in particular, but he sets apart a distinct and different section to give weight to importunate prayer. To prevent any discouragement in praying, he lays as a basic principle the fact of God's great fatherly willingness—that God's willingness to answer our prayers exceeds our willingness to give good and necessary things to our children, just as far as God's ability, goodness, and perfection exceed our infirmities and evil. As a further assurance and stimulant to prayer, Christ gives the most positive and iterated assurance of answer to prayers. He declares: "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." And to make assurance doubly sure, he adds: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Why does he unfold to us the Father's loving readiness to answer the prayers of his children? Why does he asseverate [declare] so strongly that prayer will be answered? Why does he repeat that positive asseveration *six times*? Why does Christ, on two distinct occasions, go over the same strong promises, iterations, and reiterations in regard to the certainty of prayer being answered? Because he knew that there would be delay in many an answer which would call for importunate pressing, and that if our faith did not have the strongest assurance of God's willingness to answer, delay would break it down. And that our spiritual sloth would come in, under the guise of submission, and say "It is not God's will to give what we ask," and so cease praying, and lose our case. After Christ had put God's willingness to answer prayer in a very clear and strong light, he *then* urges to importunity, and that every

unanswered prayer, instead of abating our pressure, should only increase intensity and energy. If asking does not get, let asking pass into the settled attitude and spirit of seeking. If seeking does not secure the answer, let seeking pass on to the more energetic and clamorous plea of knocking. We must persevere till we get it. No failure here—if our faith does not break down.

As our great example in prayer, our Lord puts love as a primary condition—a love that has purified the heart from all the elements of hate, revenge, and ill will. Love is the supreme condition of prayer, a life inspired by love. The 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is the law of prayer, as well as the law of love. The law of love is the law of prayer, and to master this chapter from the epistle of St. Paul is to learn the first and fullest condition of prayer.

Christ taught us also to approach the Father in his name. That is our passport. It is in his name that we are to make our petitions known.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do.

How wide and comprehensive is that “whatsoever.” There is no limit to the power of that name. “Whatsoever ye shall ask.” That is the divine declaration, and it opens up to every praying child a vista of infinite resource and possibility.

And that is our heritage. All that Christ has, may become ours if we obey the conditions. The one secret is prayer. The place of revealing and of equipment, of grace and of power, is the prayer-chamber, and as we meet there with God, we shall not only win our triumphs but we shall also grow in the likeness of our Lord and become his living witnesses to men.

Without prayer, the Christian life, robbed of its sweetness and its beauty, becomes cold and formal and dead; but rooted in the secret place where God meets and walks and talks with his own, it grows into such a testimony of divine power that all men will feel its influence and be touched by the warmth of its love. Thus, resembling our Lord and Master, we shall be used for the glory of God and the salvation of our fellow men.

And that, surely is the purpose of all real prayer, and the end of all true service.

E. M. Bounds on Prayer

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Methodist minister and Civil War chaplain Edward McKendree Bounds (1835–1913) considered conversation with God as foundational to the Christian's life as breathing. He devoted the last 17 years of his life to intense intercession and to penning some of the most powerful and popular works on prayer. This volume features three of his very best books: *Essentials in Prayer*, *Power Through Prayer*, and *Purpose in Prayer*.

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