

PREVAILING PRAYER

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The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

CONTENTS

Foreword
The Privilege of Prayer
The Power of Prayer
The Word of God and Prayer
Faith and Prayer
Prayer and Soul Saving
Prayer and the Holy Spirit
Prayer and the Latter Rain
Watching Unto Prayer
The Morning Watch
Regularity in Prayer
Hindrances to Prayer
Prayer and Repentance
Prayer and Confession
Prayer and Forgiveness
Prayer and Submission
Prayer and Restitution
Prayer and Unity
Prayer and Thanksgiving
Secret Prayer
Public Prayer
Persevering Prayer
Prevailing Prayer
Effectual Prayer
Fervent Prayer
Prayer That Avails Much

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

FOREWORD

PRAYER is as vital to the spiritual life as breathing is to the physical. We must “pray without ceasing,” just as we must breathe without ceasing. In either case death is the certain result of willful negligence or stubborn disobedience to the laws that govern our spiritual and physical beings. The penalty is not an arbitrary sentence, but rather the operation of natural law with its self-imposed judgment and punishment. The person who refuses to breathe, brings upon himself the sentence of physical death. Likewise the person who neglects or refuses to pray, cuts off the source of spiritual life and the means of maintaining it.

Prayer is the very soul of the Christian religion. Without it, profession becomes a hollow and lifeless form and religious experience a valley of dry bones. It is prayer that gives religion its vitality, and spirituality its radiant glow. There are many religious practices, but prayer is the most holy exercise of the soul. It takes the worshiper into the holy of holies of devotion, the inner sanctuary of spiritual experience. It is the secret of the beauty of holiness.

This book has been written with the hope and prayer that it will bring to the readers a quickening of spiritual life through the agency of fervent and effectual prayer; that its reading will result in an increasing experience in the kind of wrestling with God that exerts a mighty influence and prevails with God and man. As princes of the royal family of heaven we have the privilege of knowing more and more of the power of prevailing prayer.

THE AUTHOR

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

The Privilege of Prayer

HE SPAKE a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Luke 18: 1. The parable was of the unjust judge who finally granted the request of the widow, not on the basis of justice, but because of her persistency. The word “parable” comes from the Latin parabola, which means a comparison or illustration. It is a thing figuratively expressed—a figure or similitude.

The purpose of this parable was to teach Christians not to lose heart in prayer and give up too soon. Faintness is a condition of weakness or weariness. It symbolizes the loss of hope and faith. It describes one who becomes discouraged and gives up. It is the opposite of hope, faith, courage, and persistency.

The widow of the parable repeatedly came and entreated the judge. She refused to take “No” for an answer because she knew that her cause was just and that it was the duty of the judge to grant her request. He doubtless treated her discourteously and did everything possible to discourage her, but to no avail. The judge is called “unjust” by way of contrast with a just God. If an unjust judge will finally render justice and grant the persistent request of a suppliant, surely “the God of Justice” will hear and answer the requests of His people when they are in harmony with His will.

This is true even “though He bear long with them” or “although He seems slow in taking action on their behalf.” (Weymouth.) To us, God sometimes seems slow in answering our prayers. What is the reason for this delay? Most answers to prayer must be delayed for the good of those who pray. Prayer does not change God, nor does it change His mind. He already knows our needs and longs to supply them. He even anticipates our needs before we pray. “It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” Isaiah 65:24. Prayer changes us. It changes our attitude and our character. It prepares us to receive and appreciate what God finally gives us.

Parents ruin their children when they immediately grant every request. Such children become greedy, selfish, self-centered, proud, and unappreciative. They are often ruined for this life and for all eternity. The best children, and later the most useful and unselfish men and women, are those whose requests were often denied or at least delayed until their characters were developed. By years of self-denial and discipline in the school of experience, they learned to be unselfish and appreciative. The greatest men and women are developed in the school of hard knocks. Would our heavenly Father be less wise than earthly parents in training His children?

Even though God does hear and answer the persistent prayer of faith, Jesus ended the parable with the question, “Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Because of delayed answers to prayer, faith sometimes wanes. Faith will be especially scarce in the last days, when it should be the most plentiful. The question of Jesus is answered in Revelation 14:12, where we are told that our Lord will be welcomed at His return by a people who have “the faith of Jesus.”

“The faith of Jesus,” or the kind of faith Jesus had, will be obtained in the same way He obtained His faith—“by prayer and fasting.” (See Matthew 17:19-21.) Only praying people develop faith, and only those who enter into the prayer life of Jesus can have the same kind of miracle-working faith He had. Such a people will be on earth when He returns. A people of faith who are persistent in prayer will proclaim a message that will lighten the earth with its glory.

The greatest need of the modern church is a spiritual revival, and this will come only in answer to prayer. Every revival since Pentecost has been produced by a few praying saints who were persistent in their requests. The refreshing showers of the early rain came in answer to the continual prayers of a small group. It is not necessary to wait for a mass movement in the church. One righteous person can move the arm of God. The power that shook the world in the great Reformation came from the secret place of prayer. From the same source must come the power that will complete the Reformation and bring a people back to the faith and practice of Christ and the apostles.

Prayer is therefore the greatest privilege of Christians in this sinful and rebellious world. It is the breath of spiritual life to the soul. It is to the spiritual life what breathing is to the physical. Its neglect leads to certain spiritual death. Prayer is communion, or conversation, with God. It is the golden cord that connects man with God, earth with heaven. It is the power that moves the arm that moves the world. Prayer can change the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. It makes the future as bright as the promises of God.

Someone has said that “prayer is the golden river at whose brink some die of thirst while others

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

kneel and drink.”

The Power of Prayer

THE evangelization of the world is a super. human task. It requires divine power. When Jesus gave the gospel commission, He made it clear that if the disciples would preach the message, He would furnish the power, and that the supply was unlimited. The Father had placed all the power of heaven and earth in His hands, that He might dispense it to them for their world embracing task. The keeping and witnessing power required for their work was to be obtained from Christ for the asking. This omnipotent power would be sent through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The asking began in the upper room, and the power was given on the day of Pentecost.

The power came “as of a rushing mighty wind.” On a later occasion, “when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together.” Acts 4:31. The prayers of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail brought “a great earthquake” that opened the prison doors. Wind and earthquake are two of the greatest powers of nature. Prayer has cyclone and shaking power. It moves and changes things touched by its influence.

Prayer is one of the chiefest of those spiritual weapons that “are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5. The prayers of the apostles not only shook the place where they prayed and the prison where they were confined but also shook kingdoms. Pagan bulwarks and evil strongholds fell before their prevailing prayers. No barrier could stand before the triumphant march of the soldiers of the cross as they “went forth conquering, and to conquer.” “The gates of hell” could not prevail against them.

Most of the wonderful answers to prayer recorded in the Scriptures came as the result of the supplications of one godly man or woman. Some of these prayers changed the course of human history. Israel was many times saved by the prayers of a single man of God. Joseph prayed, and God delivered him from the Egyptian dungeon, made him governor of the empire, and thus saved both Egypt and Israel during the time of famine.

The prayers of Moses delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and made of them a great nation. His prayers delivered them from destruction by the warlike Amalekites and again later from the wrath of an offended God at Mount Sinai. The prayers of Elijah defeated the purpose of Jezebel and saved Israel from a terrible apostasy and possible extinction. The prayers of Asa brought defeat to an Ethiopian army of one million men with three hundred chariots, the ancient tanks. The earnest petitions of King Jehoshaphat brought victory to the small army of Israel when it was attacked by overwhelming allied forces. The prayers of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others delivered Israel from Babylonian captivity and restored the nation in the homeland. It was the power of prayer that wielded the sword of the Spirit in the great Protestant Reformation and thus changed the history of the world.

The prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian warrior. Nothing else so enrages Satan or so surely prevails against him. He hates the name of Christ and is always alarmed when we call on Him for help against his devices. Earnest, fervent prayer causes Satan’s whole host to tremble and retreat. Though we belong to a defeated race, Satan our conqueror is a defeated foe. He has been defeated by Christ on every battlefield, and the victories of Emmanuel are promised to those who seek in faith. Every child of God should learn to say with Paul, “Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57. This triumph by faith is promised to the Christian “always” and “in every place.” 2 Corinthians 2:14.

“Satan dreads nothing but prayer The church that lost its Christ was full of good works. Activities are multiplied that meditation may be ousted, and organizations are increased that prayer may have no chance. Souls may be lost in good works as surely as in evil ways. The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.”-S. CHADWICK.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

The Word of God and Prayer

THE church is engaged in a warfare in which she must “fight the good fight of faith.” Every Christian is a soldier clothed in armor and equipped with weapons for defense and aggressive fighting. The soldiers of the cross who put on the whole armor of God are assured of victory over the unseen hosts of darkness under the leadership of the prince of devils. “Therefore put on the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground in the evil day, and, having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field.” Ephesians 6:13, Weymouth. Christians are not on a playground, enjoying a picnic. We are on a battlefield, engaged in a fight to the finish. It is an all-out war. We occupy a fortress, not a pleasure house. The reward is promised only to “him that overcomes.”

In Paul’s picture of this spiritual conflict the Word of God and prayer are the only weapons for offensive, or aggressive, warfare. The various parts of the armor are for defensive purposes only. The mighty “weapons of our warfare,” therefore, which pull down strongholds, “fortresses,” and unholy “imagination,” and which bring “into captivity” straying and reprobate thoughts, are the Word of God and prayer. These two weapons of the Christian warrior are inseparable in the all-out battle for victory. One cannot be used effectively without the other. The Word is powerless without prayer, and prayer is ineffectual without the Word. The Word of God is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword” only when it is wielded by effectual, fervent prayer.

The program of the apostles is stated in Acts 6:4: “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” The result of this plan is stated in verse 7: “The word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith * “ The same program will bring the same results today. The modern ministry is spending more time in serving tables than in study and prayer. No man can properly minister the Word without spending much time in the study of the Word, and the Word ministered will produce little or no results unless seasoned with much prayer. When the church returns to the apostolic program, we shall see Pentecostal results. Again the sword of the Spirit will be edged with power and bathed in the lightning of heaven, so that it will cut its way through doubt and unbelief, and produce thousands of converts in a day. This experience will be repeated when leaders again give themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

Prayer and the study of the Word must be properly balanced, in order that they may be effectual. Too much study and too little prayer lead to formalism and legalism, to a cold, hard, dead, Christless religion. This produces a critical, exacting, self-satisfied, pharisaical spirit. On the other hand, the overemphasis of prayer to the neglect of the study of the Word of God creates extremes and fanaticism. Persons who follow this course are not controlled by the reason and judgment that come only from a knowledge of the Scriptures. Like many of the Jews, they have a zeal for God, but as Paul says, it is an enlightened zeal. If we would be well-balanced Christians, we must rightly proportion study and prayer.

Prayer is communication, or conversation, and calls for a division of the time between the two who converse. It is always impolite for one person to do all the talking and monopolize all the time. The same is true in our communing with God. He talks to us through His Word; we talk back through prayer. The Lord does not want to do all the talking, nor does He want us to be so rude as to consume all the time and refuse to listen to His voice.

The apostle Paul speaks of a class of professed Christians in the last days who have “a form of godliness” but deny “the power there of.” Religion must have form and organization, but form without power is like a body with out life. It is God’s Word that gives us a knowledge of true religion. It tells us what He requires of us and what our conduct should be. But it is prayer that puts life and power into our religious experience. It puts the spirit of Jesus into the doctrines of Jesus. Otherwise our spiritual experience is like a valley of dry bones. Prayer makes us kind and sympathetic toward others. It subdues the nature and gives us grace to live out the golden rule.

Faith and Prayer

AN IMPORTANT element in prevailing prayer is faith. The prayer of faith is the only kind of prayer that is ever answered. Prayer is either an audible or an inaudible expression of the desires of the heart, but

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

unless our prayers are backed by faith, they fall lifeless at our feet or go no higher than our heads. Faith is the power that sends our prayers heavenward. It gives them wings so that they reach God.

Sometimes when we pray, it seems that the very heavens above our heads are brass and that our prayers cannot penetrate to the throne of God. That imaginary brass barrier is composed of doubt. This great obstacle to answered prayer is pierced by faith. Faith is the bow that sends the arrows of our petitions to the throne of the Eternal. A painted fire is no fire; a dead man is no man; and a faithless prayer is no prayer, because it has no life or power. Faithless prayers are like arrows without heads, swords without edges, birds without wings. They cannot pierce or cut or fly.

In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian and Hopeful, while on their way to the eternal city, got off the highway of holiness and fell into the hands of Giant Despair, who locked them up in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. After having tried every means within their power to escape from prison, they despaired of deliverance. As a last means they resorted to prayer, and continued praying till almost break of day. Then Christian thought of the key of faith which was concealed in his bosom and had been entirely forgotten. To their delight this key opened the door of the dungeon, the outer door, and the iron gate leading out of the yard and to freedom. Many professed Christians are in despair, locked up in Doubting Castle. Their prayers are not answered because they do not use the key of faith.

Moody declared that "prayer is the golden key that unlocks the treasures of heaven." Another has said: "Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources' of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching, we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation." - *Steps to Christ*, P. 99.

What is faith? The answer is given in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see." (Weymouth.) Practically everything the Christian hopes and prays for is out of sight, or invisible'. Faith is the assurance that these things are real, that God's promises are good, and that He will keep His word. Faith means depending wholly upon the promises of God with no evidence in sight except a "thus said the Lord."

One of the most beautiful illustrations of the prayer of faith is found in Matthew 8:5-10. A Roman officer made supplication to Christ in behalf of his sick servant. Jesus promised to visit his home and heal the palsied man. The centurion decided that he was not worthy to receive a visit from such an honored guest, and asked Jesus to "speak the word only," and with assurance added, "and my servant shall be healed." Jesus spoke the word, and the Gentile officer, with no evidence in sight, believed Him, and went his way rejoicing because his servant was healed. He believed that what he hoped and prayed for was his even before it was confirmed by eyesight. Jesus marveled at such faith, and told His disciples that He had not seen "so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Since faith means depending on the word of God, there can be no genuine faith till God speaks or until we know what He has spoken. Otherwise it is presumption. This is illustrated by Peter's experience in walking on the water. When the frightened disciples were assured that the "ghost" was Christ, Peter cried out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Jesus answered, "Come." Peter knew that to jump out of the boat without an invitation would be presumption. He knew that the waters of Galilee could not hold him up. That had been demonstrated many times in his fishing experiences. Christ must speak first before he could exercise faith. It was his faith in the word "come" that held him up. This was the substance of that for which he hoped and asked. When he took his eyes off Christ and exultantly looked back at his fellow disciples, he began to sink. Jesus saved him and rebuked him for his little faith.

James declares that many of our prayers are unanswered because we "ask amiss." It is the Word of God that tells us what we need and gives us a knowledge of the promises of God. Therefore it is the Word that regulates our praying so that we know what to ask for. We show our faith by earnestly asking for what God has promised to give. The Lord delights to fulfill His word in answer to the prayer of faith.

We are told that the Lord is very liberal in His dealings with those who ask in unwavering faith. The petitioner whose faith wavers does not get anything from the Lord. (See James 1:5-8.) Faithless prayers are unanswered prayers. Doubtless this is the chief reason why so few prayers are answered in this faithless generation of doubt and skepticism. The promise is that if we ask anything in His name, it will be granted. A bank note without a signature at the bottom is a worthless piece of paper. It is the stroke of the pen that confers on it its value. Prayer is a feeble thing in itself; but when endorsed by Christ, it is valuable and avails much. It is faith that endorses the check with the name or promise of Christ.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

Prayer and Soul Saving

JESUS is our example in all things, including soul saving. He is the great scientist in the science, of salvation. His methods were the best, and He gave them to His disciples when He commissioned them to carry on the work He had begun. For more than three years He trained them for this work by both precept and example. The methods used by Christ and His disciples bring success in any age. By these same methods the work of redemption will be finished under the latter rain.

Prayer occupied an important place in the work of Christ and His apostles. It was the chief secret of their success. It was the soul of their religion and the science of their labors. A religion without a soul is a religion without life and power. Prayer is the holiest exercise of the soul. The salvation of souls, is the greatest work committed to mortals. When its impelling power is prayer, it is the greatest of all sciences.

The place of prayer is the place of power. It is the powerhouse, or dynamo, of the church, whence comes its light to lighten the earth with its gospel truth. From the secret place of prayer comes the power of Christianity. Jesus told His disciples that "all power" was available in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which would be given them in answer to prayer. This would qualify them to be witnesses. All the resources of heaven are at the command of those who are seeking to save the lost; the angels of heaven are waiting to co-operate in this noble work.

Jesus was the greatest soul saver because He knew best how to prevail in prayer. He spent a great deal of time praying for His disciples. He told Peter He had prayed for him, that in the hour of trial his faith would not fail. Before He ordained the twelve, Jesus spent all night in prayer. In the prayer of John 17 Jesus said He had kept all except "the son of perdition." One whom He dearly loved and for whom He had labored and prayed had slipped through His fingers and been lost. It almost broke the heart of Jesus to lose Judas. This is a real passion for souls.

In His prayer Jesus virtually said, "I have kept most of those whom Thou has committed to My care. I have kept impulsive and fickle Simon. In spite of many a weakness and many a blunder My grace has proved sufficient for him. I have kept James and John, the sons of thunder, in spite of their narrowness and their keen ambition. I have kept Matthew, having wooed him from his moneybags. I have kept gloomy and doubting Thomas, in spite of the fact that he tends to cling to life's somber and shady side as ivy clings to old ruins. But Judas has thwarted Me. Judas has disappointed all the fine dreams that I cherished for him. In spite of all the big possibilities that were locked in his gloomy heart, in spite of all that I did for him and longed to do, he has run past Me and I have lost him."-C. G. CHAPPELL, Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, p. 184.

Prayer occupied an important place in the soul saving program of the apostolic church. The Lord instructed His people to pray for all men, including kings and all in authority. In every human being, however sinful, Jesus beholds a potential son of God whom He longs to restore to divine favor. Paul continually prayed for his converts that they might not fail. He prayed "day and night with tears." Thus he watered the seeds of truth. No wonder there was a glorious harvest. In return he asked his converts to pray for him.

A working church in travail for souls will be a praying church, a believing church, a receiving church. A church whose members seek the Lord daily will feed on the bread of life, will drink of the water of life, and will have a burden for souls. Earnest supplications from broken, contrite hearts will bring apostolic success in soul saving.

When Job ceased to argue and debate with his friends, and instead prayed for them, his captivity turned, and the situation was entirely changed. The same procedure would turn the captivity of many today and would give them a vision of God and therefore of self such as transformed the character and changed the experience of Job. As in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, the Lord can bring praying Christians in contact with those who are praying for light. All over the earth there are honest hearted men and women looking wistfully to heaven and praying for divine enlightenment. Multitudes are on the verge of the kingdom of heaven, waiting only to be gathered in.

The very life and welfare of the church depends on the faithfulness of Christians in fulfilling the great commission. To neglect this divinely appointed task is to invite spiritual feebleness and decay and eventual death. Where there is no missionary activity or foreign mission program, love soon wanes, and

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

faith grows dim and disappears.

How beautiful is the statement that “the humblest worker, moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth and make melody through eternal ages.”

Prayer and the Holy Spirit

IF A SON shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Luke 11:11-13.

The first three questions imply a negative answer. The love of our heavenly Father greatly transcends the love of earthly parents. The Holy Spirit is a gift, promised to all who accept the gospel. A gift is not earned or merited. It is not a payment for good works. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God to those who ask Him for it. This indicates that those who do not ask will not receive. “You have not, because you ask not,” said James, and this applies with special force to the gift of the Spirit.

In the parable on prayer recorded in Luke 11:5-10, the gift asked for was received only because of the importunity of the petitioner. To importune means to urge with frequent application and with persistent entreaties. Jesus closes the parable with the statement: “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” This promise will not be fulfilled unless we pray with importunity. Such praying will bring us the great gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that brings all other needed blessings in its train.

According to Matthew 7:11, the gift of the Holy Spirit includes all “good things.” It was for this reason that the disciples in the upper room centered their petitions upon this one great gift. They made this the burden of their prayers, because they knew that all other blessings would be included. Eventually in these last days God’s people will get a vision of their need. Like the disciples, they will ask that all their needs be supplied in the one all-inclusive gift and will continue to pray until their prayers are answered in the refreshing showers of the latter rain of spiritual power.

In the great commission Jesus declared that “all power” had been given Him by the Father to be dispensed to the church through the agency of the Holy Spirit, His vicegerent, or representative, on earth. He told the disciples to “tarry” at Jerusalem for the promised power and then “go into all the world” with the gospel message. The waiting was not a time of idleness. It was spent in asking and in preparation for receiving, that they might be qualified to minister the Word. They prayed earnestly for the fulfillment of “the promise” of the Father. Pentecost and its glorious results were the answer to persistent and urgent prayer. In answer to their prayers the Spirit came in no modified energy but in the fullness of divine power.

One needs only to read the book of Acts to know that the gift of the Spirit did bring all other blessings to the early church. The following is one of many verses that give the secret of apostolic success: “The church, however, throughout the whole of Judah, Galilee, and Samaria, had peace and was spiritually built up; and grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord and receiving encouragement from the Holy Spirit.” Acts 9:31, Weymouth.

Among the first converts were two of the wealthiest men of the nation, Joseph and Nicodemus. The Jewish Talmud declared that Nicodemus was one of the three richest men among the Jews. They were so rich that either of them could have fed the inhabitants of Jerusalem for ten years. The early church discovered that God is not straitened for men or means. Has God changed? Has He become poverty stricken? Why, then, the dearth of both men and means in modern Christendom? The remedy is evident. Why, then, is it not applied?

Modern Christians should pray as earnestly for the power of the Holy Spirit as did the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. If they needed this gift then, we need it even more today. The promise of the Spirit belongs as much to us as it did to the early disciples. It was made to the whole church reaching down to the end of time when the gospel commission would be fulfilled. The members of the church have somehow come to feel that they must rely on their own efforts and that little help is to be expected from above. They have so long been content with little power and results that their spiritual strength has become

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

feeble and their experience dwarfed. They forget that the power of God awaits their demand and reception, and that through this means alone God will “finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.”

Prayer and the Latter Rain

THAT the latter rain of spiritual power will come in answer to prayer is evident from Zechariah 10:1: “Ask you of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain. So the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.”

The early rain fell on those who were praying for it. It came as the result of asking. The windows of heaven will be opened for the showers of the latter rain when the church becomes as earnest in asking as were the disciples in the upper room. The asking must be in the time of the latter rain. In heaven, we are told, “there is a time for every purpose and for every work.” Israel left Egypt on a prophetic date. Jesus was born at the appointed time. He was baptized and crucified at the time foretold. The early rain fell when it was due because the disciples prayed for it at the right time. Both the time and the asking are necessary to success, but the answer may be delayed by delayed asking. The time of the latter rain continues from the time it is due till its refreshing showers become a reality.

The statement, “The Lord shall give to every one” the promised showers, indicates that He will not withhold His blessings from the individual who prays even in the midst of a lukewarm church. The Lord always deals with the individual. He says, “If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Because a group of individuals were asking and ready, the early rain fell on the day of Pentecost. Those who are waiting for the whole church to be revived will be disappointed. The time will never come when the entire membership will be awakened. Therefore we must enter upon the work individually.

The time has come when the spirit of prayer should actuate every believer, bringing about a spiritual revival and reformation in preparation for the finishing of the gospel work under the latter rain, which will lighten the earth with the glory of God. One praying member with a vision of his own needs and the lukewarm condition of the church will soon lead others to join with him in making intercession for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Such praying will produce meekness, humility, and a consciousness of dependence on God, and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife. The unity of the upper room will bring the same blessings that visited the disciples. Being “of one accord” is an important prerequisite to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

According to Joel 2:23, 24, the church in the last days is to receive two rains, an early rain and a latter rain. The first falls “moderately,” or comes as “a teacher of righteousness” (margin). Moderately means “softly as the gentle rain.” An early rain experience must precede the latter rain. It is the preparation for the latter rain. It is the result of the acceptance of righteousness by faith as an actual experience. This new conversion, or rebirth, is the preparation for the greater blessing by which the Lord will “finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.”

These two rains that come so close together are again pictured in Hosea 6:1-3: “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

The visitation of the Holy Spirit will come as the result of a return to the Lord in prayer and consecration. As the result of this revival the Lord will return to His people to heal their back sliding and bind up the wounds made by sin. The plea of the Lord is, “Return unto Me, and I will return unto you.” The covenant-keeping God will fulfill His promises when we comply with the conditions. He will meet us more than halfway.

The greatest need of the modern church is a visitation from Heaven. When the Lord returns to Zion, the church will arise and shine and be clothed with the glory of God. Then will the church appear “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” The coming of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain will bring this to pass. For the realization of this hope every believer should earnestly and expectantly pray.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

Watching Unto Prayer

THE end of all things is at hand: be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” 1 Peter 4:7. This message is addressed to those who will be living on the earth when the end of all things is at hand. It is therefore a Heaven-sent message to the generation in which we live. The fact that the end of all earthly things is at hand constitutes a mighty challenge to sober watching and earnest prayer. God’s remnant people should be a sober-minded and praying people.

Each year in the Mosaic sanctuary and its services the Lord pictured to ancient Israel the entire plan of salvation. On the Day of Atonement the typical service showing how God takes away sin, came to an end. This solemn service was figurative of the close of probation and was indeed “the time of the end.” The solemnity of the occasion sobered all Israel. All festivities ceased, and all forms of pleasure seeking were discontinued. The Day of Atonement was heralded by the blowing of trumpets, which continued for ten days. This period was known as “God’s loud call to repentance.” It reminded the people that the day of reckoning had come, when all sins must be confessed and forsaken, or the sinner would be “cut off” from among the people of God.

From the first blast of the trumpets till the close of the Day of Atonement the people became more serious and diligent in the all-absorbing business of getting rid of sin. More and more time was devoted to prayer, and the prayers became increasingly fervent until the tenth day of the seventh month, which was a day of prayer and fasting. Because the end of all things pertaining to the typical services was at hand, the Israelites were sober and watched unto prayer. When the sun set, marking the close of the day, they were on their knees, praying that the Lord would seal their names in the book of life.

The church is now living in the antitypical day of atonement, or judgment. It is “the time of the end” of Christ’s priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary for the taking away of the sins of His people. For about a ten-year period before this solemn event began, a message was heralded to the world in trumpet tones, announcing that “the hour of His judgment is come.” Those who carried that message were a sober and serious minded people. They knew how to pray, and the nearer they came to the end of the prophetic 2300year period the more earnestly and fervently they prayed. The message was a loud call to repentance and reformation in preparation for the judgment and the coming of the Lord.

Just before probation closes, there must come another loud call to repentance. The message of Acts 3:19 will then apply: “Repent, therefore, and reform your lives, so that the record of your sins may be canceled, and that there may come seasons of revival from the Lord.” (Weymouth.) This call to earnest prayer and repentance is now due. The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place in the church. This reformation will be accompanied by a revival of the spirit of prayer.

“Watch unto prayer” was the message of Christ to His disciples. What does it mean to watch? It means to be constantly on guard against a vigilant foe who “walks about, seeking whom he may devour.” The Christian soldier must not fall asleep at his post. In the Garden of Gethsemane the disciples kept awake as long as they prayed. The call to watch and pray is a call to awaken and then to keep awake. Like the disciples in the garden, unless we “watch and pray,” we shall go to sleep, even in the hour of crisis.

No person can be vigilant and on the alert against the wiles of the devil without being a diligent student of the Scriptures. We are told that the shield of faith enables us to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and faith is dependence on the Word of God. A knowledge of the Scriptures, and especially of the prophecies, gives us the expectation of the coming of the Lord so that we are in a watchful attitude. The call is therefore a call to study and pray. It is by giving heed to the sure word of prophecy, which is God’s great timepiece, that we may “know the time” and be ready for the greatest event of all ages.

The following statement by Jesus is applicable at the present time: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find watching.” Luke 12:35-37

The Morning Watch

IN THE morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

place, and there prayed.” Mark 1:35. Jesus observed the morning prayer watch. He began the day with that which was of first importance. It was in the place of prayer that Jesus fought His battles, and then on the battlefield He calmly claimed the victory He had gained in the secret place of the Most High. Jesus even agonized with His Father in the secret place of prayer, and then went forth into the outer world with the stride of a conqueror. Altogether too often His followers take their ease in the closet and then go forth to failure and defeat. With Jesus the real battle was always fought and won in advance.

From the study of the life of Jesus it seems that the only struggles that really taxed His energies were at the place of prayer. After winning there He seemed to accomplish everything else with comparative ease. While alone in prayer in the garden, Jesus was in terrible agitation; but in the presence of His enemies a little later He was calm and composed. Every effort of His enemies-to rob Him of His poise failed miserably. In the most heated argument Jesus never let fall a single statement that He had to take back or for which He had to apologize. He was never taken by surprise or off guard. When His foes were the most certain that they had Him trapped, He gave a devastating reply that left them baffled and defeated.

The secret of the poise and calmness and wisdom of the Master was His prayer life. That the morning prayer watch was a regular habit with Jesus is made clear by the prophecy in Isaiah 50:4-7: “He awakens each morning mine ear that I might be attentive as a disciple.” (Swedish Version.) “Morning by morning He wakens me to learn my lesson, and never have I disobeyed or turned away.” (Moffatt.) The Father wakened Jesus each morning to study, and pray, and sometimes it was “a great while before day.” He knew the needs of the day and the preparation necessary to meet them. The psalmist said, “I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.” Psalms 63:6. “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” Psalms 4:4. The Lord can speak to us and hear us better when all is quiet and still. The early morning is the best time for study and prayer, unless it be during the night watches when we cannot sleep. This is true not only because of the quietness but also because the mind is fresh and clear. To the Lord should be given our first time and thoughts in the day. He should be the first person to whom we speak in the morning, and we should permit Him to be the first to speak to us. This is the best way to begin the day. It is the way Jesus began His days.

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.” Luther always combined prayer with the study of the Word. He said further, “He that has prayed well has studied well. Prayer is the better half of study.” It is a well-known fact that study without prayer leads to cold, lifeless formalism, while prayer without study produces the fires of fanaticism. Luther, the leader in the great Reformation, was a very busy man, but he took time for prayer and study. From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in Reformation days. But prayer alone was not enough. Luther said, “I set the Word of God to running to and fro in the earth, and kingdoms fell and thrones trembled.”

Wesley devoted the morning hours from four to six in prayer, meditation, and study. One who knew him well said; “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.” Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four to six each morning to God. Bishop Asbury said, “I purpose to rise at four o’clock as often as I can and spend two’ hours in prayer and meditation.” Samuel Rutherford rose at three for his prayer appointment with God.

Daniel had an exemplary program. He set apart three periods in the day for prayer, and never permitted anything to interfere with his appointments with God. He was prime minister of the Medo-Persian Empire and must have been a very busy man, with a whole multitude of business affairs to interfere, but he did not consider his devotional periods as time wasted. Prayer is the greatest of all timesavers. By making the work of the day go more smoothly and efficiently, the Lord can and does more than make up the time spent in prayer. Is there any legitimate excuse for modern Christians to neglect the morning watch with God?

Regularity in Prayer

WE ARE told that “there is a time to every purpose under the heaven.” While the Christian should pray “always” and “without ceasing,” by living constantly in the spirit of prayer and in the atmosphere of heaven and in recognition of a continuous need, he should also set apart special times for communion with God and permit nothing trivial to interfere. He should never cease to meet his regular appointments with his Lord.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

This life is so complicated and strenuous that regular periods of retirement for meditation and prayer are absolutely necessary if we would maintain and increase our spiritual experience. We must often step aside from the dusty pathway of life's journey, with its noisy and unholy traffic, and visit the green pastures and still waters of private prayer.

Israel was taught regularity in prayer by the morning and evening sacrifice, when the offering of incense upon the golden altar was a call to prayer. This custom was to be perpetuated in the morning and evening worship of later times, when the father, the priest of the family, should call the entire household to prayer at the family altar at the beginning and close of each day. Zacharias was ministering at the altar "at the time of incense" when the angel Gabriel came to announce the birth of John the Baptist. Heavenly messengers visit the homes where the altar fires are kept burning at regular seasons, and they should not be disappointed.

Concerning the early morning visit of the patriarch Job to the altar of prayer, we read, "Thus did Job continually," or "all the days" (margin). The psalmist sets apart seven regular times a day for prayer. He said, "Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." Psalms 119:164. According to verses 147 and 148 one of these seasons of prayer was held very early in the morning. "I am up before the dawn to pray, waiting for Thy promises; I awaken through the night to muse upon Thy word." (Moffatt.)

Perhaps the best plan for regular private prayer is three times a day, as was the custom of David and Daniel. Both were very busy men, one being a king and the other the prime minister of a world empire. Daniel was the chief of three presidents who ruled over one hundred and twenty provinces with their princes. What great burdens of state rested on his shoulders and weighed on his mind continually! How little spare time he had aside from his public duties. Yet he found time for three regular seasons of prayer each day and permitted nothing, not even his envious foes or the den of lions, to interfere with his practice.

Morning, noon, and night are the most natural times for prayer. Every morning there is a renewal of physical life, and there should also be a renewal of spiritual life. We should see the face of God before we see the face of men. We should breathe the atmosphere of eternity before we enter upon our earthly and transitory occupations. At noon there is a natural break in the day's program, with a little time to enter the closet and confess the mistakes of the morning and ask for help during the afternoon. The evening brings another break in life's duties and responsibilities.

The prayer in the evening is of a retrospective character. At that time we look back over the day that has just passed. We confess, the sins committed, and ask forgiveness. We also thank God for the blessings of the day and for the work accomplished with divine aid. We express our gratitude for divine guidance and wisdom. We then commit ourselves in childlike faith into the keeping of our heavenly Father, who "will neither slumber nor sleep" in His vigilant watch care over His children. Evening is the reckoning time, when the account is settled and the books are balanced, with pardon written over against all our offenses.

The Median king noticed that there was an excellent spirit in Daniel that was not found in other wise men and counselors of the realm. He appreciated his kindly manner, his unfeigned humility, his unpretentious love, his unchanging integrity, his firmness of principle, his consistency of life, which shed a fragrant influence upon all in the court. He could not help connecting his character with his religion and his habits of devotion.

The world has a right to judge us by the same standard. Let us pray regularly that our lives also may shed a fragrant influence whether we serve in positions of trust and leadership or in the most humble walks of life.

Hindrances to Prayer

THE apostle Peter enumerated certain sins that the believers must conquer, "that your prayers be not hindered." "Then you will be able to pray without hindrance," is the Twentieth Century New Testament rendering. There are conditions which hinder the prayer life and prevent our prayers from being answered. This is doubtless the reason why answered prayer in these days is the exception and not the rule. Whenever there is a marvelous answer to prayer in any part of the world, the news is heralded to the ends of the earth. Answered prayer should be the common and ordinary rather than the uncommon and extraordinary. It was

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

thus in apostolic days.

Jesus said, "If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:14. All Christ's prayers were answered. The apostles under the early rain knew the experience of continual answered prayer. Why, then, are so many of the prayers of modern Christians never answered and seemingly never heard? There are two main reasons. One is that we do not know what to ask for. We are told that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Romans 8:26. Another reason is given us by the apostle James: "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss." James 4:1 Like little children, when they make requests of their parents, we ask for too many things that are not for our good. The Holy Spirit, Christ's representative on earth, knows what we need, and is willing to reveal God's will to us, so that every prayer may be answered. We must remember that when God says "No" it is just as much an answer to prayer as when He says "Yes" to our requests.

But even though we may ask in harmony with God's will and for the things He has promised and desires to give us, we may not receive them because our prayers are hindered or frustrated by ungodliness in the life. One of these hindrances to prayer is a lack of understanding of the Scriptures. We do not know what to ask for. The hindrance to prayer mentioned by Peter was misunderstandings in the home, especially between husband and wife. He warns against the husband becoming a dictator because he is the stronger physically. He may thus fail to treat his companion as his partner, even though she is his equal in every respect except physical strength. Quarreling, nagging, and faultfinding in the home drive away the Holy Spirit and hinder prayer. The rights of every member of the family should be fully recognized and safeguarded. The home should be a part of heaven on earth, and it will be if the members of the family are genuine Christians.

In 1 Peter 3:7-12 is enumerated a list of besetting sins which frustrate prayer. "Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be you all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

The first of these hindering sins is a lack of unity. The Lord heard and answered the prayers of His disciples in the upper room as soon as they came into unity and were of one mind. Lack of compassion or sympathy is next mentioned by the apostle. God has compassion on those who show compassion to others. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," is one of the beatitudes. Lack of love is another reason for hindered prayer. The church today is charged with being lukewarm in her affection. She has lost her first love, for which sin she is asked to repent. The absence of pity and the lack of courtesy are other reasons for unanswered prayer. There is a great need for true courtesy among professed Christians. A Christian should be a real gentleman or gentlewoman. Christ was always kind and courteous.

With genuine Christians there should never be any retaliation for wrongdoing. It is human nature to retaliate, to give back what we receive, to pay as we are paid. The apostle says that we should not requite "evil with evil nor abuse with abuse, but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, because a blessing is what you have been called by God to inherit." 1 Peter 3:9, Weymouth. (See also Romans 12:17-20.) Many never have their prayers answered because of the bad spirit they manifest. They are critical and contentious. Another prayer hindrance mentioned is the unrestricted use of the tongue. The tongue that is full of guile, that is sharp and stingingly bitter, is not capable of uttering a prayer to God that He can hear and answer. (See James 3:8-10.) God will not hear the prayer of malicious gossips and talebearers.

It is "the little foxes" that "spoil the vines." It is easy to detect and deal with the larger sins but the small sins often do us the most damage. Little and hidden sins close our access to the throne of grace. The Holy Spirit is very sensitive to the condition of every heart. He is grieved by even small transgressions. Sin cannot enter the presence of God's holiness. Roots of bitterness, outbursts of temper, brooding over wrongs real and imagined, the spirit of selfishness and worldliness, evil motives even about things that are right, and a multitude of other things that might be mentioned-any one of these will hinder our prayers and affect our spiritual lives.

Prayer and Repentance

REPENTANCE is a change of mind toward God, just as conversion is a change of life or character. "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19), was the message of Peter to the Jews who had rejected and crucified the Lord. This is virtually a quotation from Ezekiel 18:30: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Repentance is the result of a conviction of sin. Through the preaching of the gospel, or the study of the Word, the Holy Spirit convinces the sinner that he is going in the wrong direction, that he is traveling the broad and easy and liberal road that leads to destruction. This conviction leads to a change of mind and attitude toward God and His Word which is an essential prerequisite to a change of character. This turning of the mind leads to the turning of ourselves into a new and different course of life and conduct.

True repentance is accompanied by feelings of regret, remorse, sorrow, and contrition, with a desire to make amends for the mistakes of the past. It is defined as "a sincere and thorough changing of the mind and disposition in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and helplessness and apprehension of God's mercy." When a person repents, he turns about and starts in the opposite direction. Repentance is therefore the essential prelude to a reversal of life and conduct, so that the things we once loved and in which we found delight become repulsive to us, and what once loomed large in importance loses its significance. Likewise those things that we once despised and deemed unnecessary become the all-important things of life.

True repentance is the result of sorrow for sin. The 'apostle Paul wrote: "Now I rejoice, not in your grief, but because the grief led to repentance; for you sorrowed with a godly sorrow, which prevented you from receiving injury from us in any respect. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, a repentance not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world finally produces death. For mark the effects of this very thing-your having sorrowed with a godly sorrow-what earnestness it has called forth in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing affection, what jealousy, what meting out of justice! You have completely wiped away reproach from yourselves in the matter." "I rejoice that I have complete confidence in you." 2 Corinthians 7:9,11, 16, Weymouth.

Surely such a change brought about by godly sorrow leading to repentance would restore our confidence in the worst of transgressors. While Paul does not specifically mention prayer in connection with the experiences of character transformation as the result of godly sorrow and repentance, we know that it plays a very important part. Prayer is the natural outlet of the pent-up and overflowing waters of grief over sin. "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the cry of the sin burdened repentant publican. "Lord, save us: we perish," has ever been the plea of men and women under conviction of sin. Repentance, like pardon, is a gift of Christ. Peter said, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31.

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts." - Steps to Christ, p. 30.

"The prayer of David after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened, inspired his prayer. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness, to be restored to harmony and communion with God."-Ibid., p. 28.

Out of the depths of a grief-stricken and repentant heart David prayed: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the JOY of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit." Psalms 51:1-12.

This is the cry of all who get a vision of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and who truly repent. If we could only realize the malignant character of sin, we would learn to love righteousness and hate iniquity. In the work of repentance the sparing of any cherished sin harbors a foe who only awaits an

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

unguarded moment to accomplish our ruin. One character defect or secret sin indulged will do to the soul what a worm-eaten plank does to the ship. The result will be utter disaster and ruin.

In the light of the needs of God's remnant people, as set forth in the Laodicean message, do we not all need to pray most earnestly for the gold of faith and love and truth to bring to an end our spiritual poverty? for the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover our spiritual nakedness? for that spiritual anointing and enlightenment that will enable us to "see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detect sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it"? Does not the church need the spirit of contrition and repentance in preparation for that spiritual revival and reformation that will bring a second Pentecost and a completed work? Let us pray for such an experience.

Prayer and Confession

CONFESSION and prayer are inseparable. The men and women who have been the most fervent and devoted in prayer have been the most ready to confess their own faults. Our prayers for others are much more effectual after our own mistakes and weaknesses have been confessed to them. Until confession has been made, the most fervent prayers for those whom we have mistreated will avail nothing. We have but little confidence in the prayers and missionary activity of those who feel that they are always right and never make mistakes.

The relation between confession and prayer is set forth by the apostle James: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5:16. This text indicates that a righteous man is one who confesses his faults to others, and then only do his prayers for them become effectual and availing. This also is the only means by which his own soul is healed of the malady of sin.

The prayer of the Pharisee in the temple was useless and ineffectual because it was void of the necessary element of confession. Speaking of Pharaoh's words to Moses, "Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me," Charles Spurgeon said: "A fatal flaw is manifest in that prayer. It contains no confession of sin. He says not, 'I have rebelled against the Lord; entreat that I may find forgiveness.' Nothing of the kind, he loves sin as much as ever. A prayer without penitence is a prayer without acceptance. If no tear has fallen upon it, it is withered. Thou must come to God as a sinner through a Savior but by no other way. He who comes to God like the Pharisee, with, 'God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are,' never draws near to God at all; but he who cries, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' has come to God by the way which God has Himself appointed. There must be confession of sin before God, or our prayer is faulty."

The wise man said, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but who so confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. The prayer of the publican was answered, and he obtained mercy and forgiveness and justification because of his wholehearted confession. In a manly and courageous manner he acknowledged his sins, and God covered them. When we try to cover our sins, God uncovers them; when we uncover them, God covers them with the beautiful robe of His righteousness.

Daniel enumerated and confessed the sins of his people as if they were his own. With him it was, "We have sinned," we "have committed iniquity," we "have done wickedly," we "have rebelled" against Thee, we have departed "from Thy precepts," we have not "hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets." We are told that the wonderful answer to his prayer came while he was confessing his sins and the sins of his people. (See Daniel 9:3-21.)

When Job ceased trying to justify himself, and began to confess his sins, the Lord, turned his captivity and blessed his missionary efforts in behalf of others. When Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me for I am undone. Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," the Lord took away his iniquity and sent him as His messenger to speak the word of life to others. When David was faced with his great sin he frankly acknowledged, "I have sinned against the Lord." And immediately the assurance came, "The Lord also hath-put away thy sin." This experience made it possible for him to write the fifty-first psalm, a psalm of confession and cleansing from sin.

If righteous Daniel, Job, Isaiah, and David needed to make confession, modern Christians are not exempt from this spiritual exercise of the soul. D. L. Moody said: "I firmly believe that the church of God will have to confess her own sins before there can be any great work of grace. There must be a deeper work

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

among God's believing people. I sometimes think it is about time to give up preaching to the ungodly, and preach to those who profess to be Christians. If we had a higher standard of life in the church of God, there would be thousands more flocking into the kingdom. What we want in these days is a true and deep revival in the church of God." - Prevailing Prayer, p. 26. Thomas Fuller said, "Man's owning his weakness is the only stock for God thereon to graft the grace of His assistance." "Confession of a fault makes half amend; denying a fault doubles it," is a well known saying of Shakespeare.

Confession produces humility, which is of great price in the sight of both God and man. The lack of it is the chief cause of the terrible Laodicean condition of the last-day church. Praying people are always humble people, and the more they pray and thus show their dependence on God, the more humble they become. One of the most humble men of post-Apostolic history was George Muller, and perhaps no man ever exhibited more faith and witnessed more direct answers to prayer. The secret of his life of spiritual power lay in the fact that four times a year he read the Bible through with the purpose of getting a message for his own soul, and this always "led to confession or to thanksgiving or to intercession or to supplication." Is it any wonder that his record revealed fifty thousand answers to prayer during his life of faith and good works?

It was, a period of prayer and confession that prepared the early disciples for the blessings of Pentecostal power. In the upper room they humbled their hearts in true repentance, confessing their unbelief. Words of penitence and confession were mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. They confessed to one another their faults, their jealousies, criticisms, and ambitions for supremacy. This is what brought them together in a unity never known before or since, so that the Holy Spirit could be poured out with power. The same course in the modern church will bring a repetition of Pentecost, and this is the greatest of all our needs. The gift of the Holy Spirit will bring all other blessings in its train.

Prayer and Forgiveness

ONE of the petitions of the Lord's prayer is, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In this prayer we ask the Lord to forgive our sins to the same extent and in the same spirit that we forgive those who have wronged us. Sin is a trespass against God, which can be removed only by forgiveness; but that forgiveness is dependent upon our being willing to forgive those who have trespassed against us. In respect to pardon, the Lord treats us as we treat others. It is the working out of the principle of the golden rule which may be stated thus: Whatsoever you would that God should do to you, do you even so to others.

This is the only part of the model prayer that Jesus emphasized and enforced by repetition: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:14,15. The spirit of forgiveness is the door into the kingdom of heaven. The refusal to forgive others closes that door in our faces. This is doubtless the reason why many prayers are not answered. The Lord cannot listen to the prayers of those who harbor an unforgiving spirit. If I am not willing to forgive another a single offense against me, how can I dare ask God to forgive me the many offenses I have committed against Him?

Later Jesus emphasized this same truth by a parable. (See Matthew 18:23-35.) The parable of the unforgiving debtor is a faithful picture of man's attitude toward God and his fellow men. What a mean and contemptible way to treat others after God has been so kind and merciful to us! It seems that only the smallest of men could be so ungrateful; yet how often we have all been guilty of such base ingratitude. When we pray the Lord's prayer, we ask Him to deal with us just as we have dealt with those who have mistreated us, and He answers our prayers before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matthew 5:23,24. You may say that you do not hold hard feelings against anyone in the world. Good, but does anyone have anything against you? Do you know of anyone who thinks you have wronged him? It may be that you are sure you are innocent of any wrong, and yet the person may think that you are guilty. The wise thing to do is to talk the matter over with him in a spirit of love and humility, and attempt to get it settled before you retire to sleep for the night. If you are right and he is wrong, the interview may result in his salvation. It is always a blessing to both parties to talk things over frankly and to pray together. Of course, there are cases where settlement is delayed because of the unreasonable attitude of the person visited, and an attempt to make things right prematurely would make matters worse. We need divine wisdom.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

In Hebrews 12:15 we are warned against a “root of bitterness” springing up in the life so that we “fail of the grace of God.” The Lord cannot answer the prayers of those who “brood over wrongs” and permit roots of bitterness to ruin their spiritual experience. This is probably affecting our prayers more than any other one thing. Once Mr. Moody, in trying to diagnose the Spiritual disease of a certain woman asked her to repeat the Lord’s prayer after him, sentence by sentence. When he got to the petition on forgiveness she refused to follow him, because, she said, “there is one woman I can never forgive.” Moody told her that God could never forgive her till she did. She answered, “Then I will never be forgiven.” A few years later she was sent to the insane asylum. The spirit of unforgiveness had driven her mad.

On another occasion Mr. Moody seemed unable to help a young woman who had remained after meeting. He finally said to her, “Is there not someone whom you do not forgive?” She looked up and said, “What made you ask that? Has anyone told you about me?” He told her that no one had given him any information about her, but since she seemed unable to receive forgiveness and peace it must be because she was unwilling to forgive someone else. She pointed to another young woman in the room and said that they had quarreled and had not been on speaking terms for years. She then promised to make things right. The Spirit was also speaking to the other woman, and they met in the middle of the room and embraced and mingled their tears in a wholehearted reconciliation. “He who forgives ends the quarrel,” is an old proverb.

In answer to Peter’s question, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” Jesus gave the Christian measure of forgiveness when He said, “Until seventy times seven.” Matthew 18:21, 22. This is just as many times as God is willing to forgive us, for we ask Him to forgive us “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” There is no limit to the forgiving grace of Him who saves “to the uttermost” all who come to Him in faith. There should, therefore, be no limit to our willingness to forgive others. The fifth beatitude should be written indelibly on every heart, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” It has been said that “forgiveness is like the fragrance of the rose that rises to bless the foot that crushes

Prayer and Submission

SUBMISSION is another important element in prayer. In this also Jesus is our example. All His prayers were offered in full submission to the will of His Father. In the greatest struggle of His conflict with sin and Satan, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the surrender of His own will was complete even though it was attained by a battle so intense that He sweat, as it were, blood. He prayed, “Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Your, be done.” Luke 22:42.

We are created free moral agents, with the power of choice. Freedom to choose is the very essence of personality and the citadel of Christianity. Someone has said: “There is nothing good but a good will; there is nothing bad but a bad will.” When the will of man surrenders to, and co-operates with, the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Every person who is not fully surrendered to God and kept by His mighty power will eventually form an alliance with the enemy of all righteousness against the kingdom of heaven, and join in battle against Christ and the soldiers of the church militant.

The greatest battle of the soldier of the cross is fought over the surrender of self to the will of God. We must be “willing to be made willing” to give voluntary submission to co-operation with the divine agencies. The human will must be placed on the side of God’s will. Prayer is the secret of unconditional surrender. How happy we should be that many of our requests have never been granted. If they had been granted they would have done us more harm than good. Doubtless some of the prayers we offer today will seem absurd to us tomorrow, and we shall be thankful that God’s will and not ours was done. That which gives to prayer its excellent quality is the fact that it is breathed from a loving and obedient heart. How true it is that we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”

Moses is an outstanding example of one who was submissive to the will of God, and yet when he faced the greatest disappointment of his life he begged to have his own way. (See Deuteronomy 3:23-27.) When the Lord told him to drop the subject and never mention it again, Moses humbly submitted. When he died, God buried him-an honor such as never has been bestowed upon another human being. Later he was resurrected and taken directly to the heavenly Canaan, where he has been an honored citizen ever since. He found that God’s way is best.

Elijah was a man who knew the meaning of answered prayer, but one of his requests was not

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

granted, because the Lord had something better planned for him. In a moment of discouragement he prayed that he might die. How foolish that request must seem to Elijah now. For almost three millenniums he has been an honored guest in heaven; whereas, if his prayer had been answered, he would be lying in an unknown and unmarked grave. He is probably one of the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones around the throne of God and assisting Christ in the priestly service of the heavenly sanctuary. He and Moses were sent as special messengers to visit Christ on the mount of transfiguration to “encourage Him concerning His death,” and to represent the resurrected and translated saints in that miniature representation of the second advent.

We cannot know the future and what is best for us. What we desire today may not be for our eternal welfare. Wise parents do not grant all the requests of their children, and well-trained children submit to the will of their parents. They realize that the superior wisdom and the experience of the parents make it possible for them to know what is best. Permitting children to have their own way and carry out their own wills always spoils them. They become stubborn, selfish, and self-willed. They go through life greatly handicapped. Willing and cheerful submission to higher authority or to unavoidable circumstances becomes difficult if not impossible to them.

Character is developed more by deprivation of the things we desire than by gratification. Sacrifice is indispensable to character building. An invalid woman was once asked whether she, would be willing either to live or to die. She answered, “Whatever pleases God.” The next question was, “But if God should refer it to you, which would you choose?” She replied, “I would refer it to Him again.” True submission always says, as did Christ, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

“The prayer of the publican was heard because it showed dependence reaching forth to lay hold upon Omnipotence. Self to the publican appeared nothing but shame. Thus it must be seen by all who seek God. By faith-faith that renounces all self-trust-the needy suppliant is to lay hold upon infinite power.

“No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, ‘Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, un-Christ like self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.’” - Christ’s Object Lessons p. 161.

This is the prayer of submission, of surrender, to the will of Him who is all-wise, who never makes a mistake. Such praying merges our will in His will, so that in carrying out our own impulses we are submitting to the will of the Eternal. This is Christianity in action.

Prayer and Restitution

RESTITUTION has a very important relation to prayer. Our prayers will never reach heaven if we are unwilling to restore to God or our fellow men that which we have unlawfully taken or kept for ourselves. Genuine repentance always leads to restitution. This includes anything taken by violence or by deceit or by embezzling that which has been placed in our hands for safe-keeping or that which was lost and is found.

The law of restitution is clearly stated in Exodus 22:1-6, Leviticus 6:2-5, Numbers 5:5-8, and Malachi 3:8-10. This includes the tithe, the withholding of which is called robbery or embezzlement. A person who is genuinely converted will restore to God the tithe which belongs to Him, and to which he has no right whatever. There is something sadly defective about the spiritual experience of the person who does not return to the Lord His own in “tithes and offerings.”

These divine laws of restriction are just as binding now as when they were instituted. If they were obeyed by all Christians, what a different world this would be! They would safeguard us against stealing in all its hideous forms. The law is that if the person trespassed against is dead or cannot be located, the recompense should be made to the Lord. If you owe a debt and the creditor is dead or cannot be found, the amount should be paid into the Lord’s treasury. Until this is done you have not discharged your obligation.

The divine promise is: “If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” Ezekiel 33:15, 16

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

The inference here is that complete forgiveness is dependent on complete restitution. “Those who profess to be followers of Christ, and who deal in an unrighteous manner, are bearing false witness against the character of a holy, just, and merciful God. Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life. Like the chief publican, he will give proof of his sincerity by making restitution.” - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

The experience of the publican Zacchaeus, of Jericho, is the most outstanding in the New Testament, if not in the whole Bible, of complete restitution as the result of conversion. As a tool of Rome, in collecting taxes, Zacchaeus was unscrupulous in his dealings, and filled his own pocket at the expense of the helpless taxpayers. He was guilty of robbery and extortion, and was despised by his countrymen. His restitution on the basis of the laws previously referred to doubtless left him a poor man, but a happy man. That day as he showed his faith by his works, the kingdom of heaven came into his heart and home. His later testimony for Christ doubtless had great weight, because all knew that he was sincere and honest.

Charles G. Finney, in speaking of professed Christians, said: “One reason for the requirement, ‘Be not conformed to this world,’ is the immense, salutary, and instantaneous influence it would have if everybody would do business on the principle of the gospel. Turn the tables over and let Christians do business one year on gospel principles. It would shake the world. It would ring louder than thunder. Let the ungodly see professing Christians in every bargain consulting the good of the person they are trading with.

Seeking not their own wealth, but every man another’s wealth,-living above the world-setting no value on the world any further than it would be the means of glorifying God; what do you think would be the effect? It would cover the world with confusion of face, and overwhelm them with conviction of sin. The thief has not repented who keeps the money he stole. He may have conviction, but no repentance. If he had repentance, he would go and give back the money. If you have cheated anyone, and do not restore what you have taken unjustly; or if you have injured anyone, and do not set about to undo the wrong you have done as far as in you lies, you have not truly repented.”

The message of John the Baptist was, “Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and “bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” This is still the gospel message. It is meat in due season today. It is the very substance of the everlasting gospel of all ages. No person can successfully have a part in the giving of this message unless he himself has repented and has brought forth in his own life proof of a change of heart by making restitution for his trespasses. It is always an evidence of genuine conversion when a person begins to feel concerned over his debts and obligations to both God and man, and begins to straighten things up. God honors and blesses those who do a thorough work of making restitution. This work of reformation removes one of the greatest of all hindrances to prayer. When this is done, prayer goes on lightning wing to the throne of grace and comes back again in abundant blessings.

Prayer and Unity

IN THE twelfth chapter of First Corinthians the church is symbolized by the human body with its various members working together in perfect unity and co-operation. The word “church” in its Greek original means “an assembly or congregation.” It is an organized body of believers called together for worship and service. Though composed of many members, it constitutes one body organized to carry out a united purpose. The secret of the success of the church in its divinely appointed mission is unity. No church ever prospered without it, and with it the church is invincible and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The adage, “United we stand; divided we fall,” has been demonstrated many times in the history of the church.

There can be no power where there are bickering and divisions. This is beautifully illustrated in a statement quoted by D. L. Moody:

“Separate the atoms which make the hammer, and each would fall on the stone as a snowflake; but welded into one, and wielded by the firm arm of the quarryman, it will break the massive rocks asunder. Divide the waters of Niagara into distinct and individual drops, and they would be no more than the falling rain, but in their united body they would quench the fires of Vesuvius, and have some to spare for the volcanoes of other mountains.”

The church is often spoken of as the church militant, because it is engaged in a warfare against the

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

hosts of darkness. The individual members are represented as soldiers composing an army. In an army unity is absolutely essential to success. Division would bring sure defeat. History tells us that at one time the Roman and Albanian armies decided to let six men, three from each army, decide the issue of battle for all. The three on one side kept together, and though wounded, soon slew two of the others, and the third took to his heels and fled. When he looked back and saw that the three were following him one by one, he turned and fell on them one at a time and slew them all and thus won the battle for his country. It is the cunning scheme of the devil to divide us that he may destroy us. It is said that as long as sheep bunch together, the wolf cannot destroy any of them; but if he can scatter them, many may become his victims.

The chief burden of Christ in His prayer to the Father just before His ascension was for the unity of His disciples. He prayed “that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me.” John 17:21. Unity among believers is the greatest of all evidences of the truthfulness of Christianity. Before a united church, modernism and skepticism are helpless and powerless. Unity among men and women of varied dispositions is the strongest evidence that can be given to save sinners. Only a united people can give a united message. If there is not complete harmony in music, the tones become offensive to the ear. It is the unity of the various tones that produces beautiful music with an agreeable message. If the tones were all alike there could be no music. It is unity in diversity that is both beautiful and powerful.

The prayer of Christ was answered on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were all “of one accord” because of the ten days of prayer and confession. Prayer always draws believers into unity with both God and man. As we are drawn to Christ we are at the same time drawn closer together. When the disciples entered the upper room, they were far from being united. They were selfish, with selfish ambitions. They were all different, with different dispositions. In and through Christ they became one in faith, in doctrine, and in spirit. They later had their differences of opinion, but with Christ dwelling in their hearts there - Could be no dissension. Christ became the center, and they approached one another as they were drawn to the great Magnet.

There can be unity only in Christ, whether it be in the home or in the church. A husband and wife can be perfectly united in love and unity only as they are united in Christ. By means of this agency all who believe in Him are mysteriously linked together with bonds of love that are not easily broken. The church will grow in unity as it grows in spirituality, and vice versa. This will produce the fruits of the Spirit in the lives of Christians. When the church is again united in Christ by earnest prayer, the power of Pentecost will be repeated in the showers of the latter rain, and God’s work will be quickly finished in us and in the world.

Prayer and Thanksgiving

THE relation between prayer and thanksgiving is set forth in Philippians 4:4-6: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Someone has said that this statement contains three precious thoughts: careful for nothing; prayerful for everything; and thankful for anything. The Philippian letter is filled with rejoicing. It is the epistle of thanksgiving. And it was at Philippi that Paul and Silas were bitterly persecuted and thrown into prison, where they demonstrated that genuine Christians can “rejoice in the Lord always” regardless of the circumstances. Such prayer, mingled with thanksgiving, contains moving and converting power. The prison doors were opened, and the jailer and his family were converted.

“Be careful for nothing” is better translated, “In nothing be anxious” (RV), or, “Do not be overanxious about anything” (Weymouth). This is a plea to stop worrying. Worried people cannot be happy or thankful. We are told that “worry is blind, and cannot discern the future.” The Christian can be thankful for everything, including the trials and tests of life, because he knows that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28. The person who believes this can understand James 1:24: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

We are all too sparing of giving thanks to the great Benefactor and Source of all our blessings. We are constant recipients of divine mercies and unmerited favors; yet how small is our gratitude and how little we express our praise and thanksgiving for what God has done for us.

None of us enjoy being around people who are always complaining. Those who carry a grouch and are always grumbling are not appreciated by anyone, including themselves. They have no friends. Some persons seem to glory in their gloom and pessimism. Of this class Clovis G. Chappell says:

“There are those who are veritable gluttons for wretchedness. They search for despair as bees search for honey. They are never so happy as when they feel that they have a perfect right to be miserable. They are never so miserable as when they feel they are duty bound to be happy.” -The Sermon on the Mount.

Such people have a false view of Christianity. The word “gospel” means “good news” or “glad tidings,” and no person can carry or receive good news without being made happy. There is something wrong with the religion that does not produce joy, or there is something wrong with the person’s understanding of it. The gospel is “good tidings of great joy.” Those who, like the Israelites in the days of Malachi, “walked mournfully before the Lord” of hosts,” misrepresent the Christian religion.

Those who rightly represent Christ will make His service appear joyful and attractive as it in reality is. Those who profess to be Christians and at the same time murmur and complain, and gather sadness and gloom to their souls, give others a false idea of Christ and the Christian life. The impression they give is that God does not want His children to be happy, and thus they bear false witness against God and His Son. Satan is anxious to make the Christian life appear sad and gloomy, toilsome and difficult, and when this view of ‘religion is shared and practiced by Christians, they second the falsehood of the great deceiver. Those who dwell upon their failures, mistakes, and disappointments are bound to be bowed down with grief and discouragement. They cannot rejoice in the Lord always, nor make their requests to the Lord with thanksgiving. A son once wrote to his father, “I’ll think more of your prayers when I see more of your praises.”

The English word “psalm” is from the Hebrew word “praise.” Thus the psalms are the praises. Almost every psalm ends with praise and gratitude, even those that deal with contrition and repentance. Some of them take us down into the deep valley of godly sorrow and brokenhearted repentance because - of sin, and yet they ring with notes of triumph and rejoicing because of God’s mercy, grace, and pardoning love. Fifteen of the psalms begin with “Praise you the Lord,” which in Hebrew is “Hallelujah.”

When Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple reached the place of praise and thanksgiving, the glory of the Lord flooded the courts of His house. When the singers of King Jehoshaphat went before the army praising the beauty of holiness and shouting, “Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures forever,” the enemies of Israel were thrown into confusion and were ignominiously defeated. The enemies of the Lord have never been able to stand before happy Christian warriors. Only genuine Christians can go onto the battlefield singing a song of victory, knowing that victory is already theirs by faith. They can with confidence say, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57. Jesus gained the victory over the enemy on every battlefield on which we will have to contend with him. “This is the victory, that overcomes the world, even our faith.” We are told that Satan “trembles and flees before the weakest saint who finds refuge in His mighty name.” Let us learn to appreciate more the privilege of prayer, but also not forget to say “thank you” to God for the benefits received.

Secret Prayer

THE divine promise is that “he that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalms 91:1. This “secret place of the Most High” is the place of secret prayer, where we commune with God. It is the audience chamber where we enter into His presence and He grants us a hearing, an audience. This is evident from Psalms 31:20: “Thou shall hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of men: Thou shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.”

Prayer offered at the family altar and in connection with public services has its place, but the life of the soul is sustained by secret communion with God. While we go about our daily tasks, it is our

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

privilege to lift up the soul to heaven and live in the atmosphere of prayer. These silent petitions rise from the altar of prayer like sweet incense and are carried on the wings of faith to the throne of grace, and the enemy is baffled and defeated. The Christian whose heart is thus stayed upon God is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. He cannot be overcome. The fiery darts of the wicked one cannot destroy his peace or ruffle his disposition. All the exceeding great and precious promises of His word, all the power of divine grace, all the resources of the Godhead, are pledged to secure his triumph.

We are told to “pray without ceasing,” “continuing instant in prayer,” and that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” This cannot refer to public prayer, which comes only two or three times a week, or to family prayer, which is repeated only once or twice a day. It must have reference to the continuous process of the secret communion of the soul with God. Prayer is the spiritual counterpart of breathing. The prophet Jeremiah said: “I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou has heard my voice: hide not Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.” Lamentations 3:55,56. Breathing must not cease if we would live physically, and praying must not cease if we would live spiritually. “Let me breathe or I die,” cries the gasping man. “Let me pray or I die,” cries the Christian.

Prayer is the breath of the soul and the secret of spiritual power. It is impossible to substitute any other means of grace and at the same time preserve the health of the soul. The wellspring of life is brought into contact with the heart through the medium of prayer. This is what strengthens the sinews and muscles of our religious experience for the duties and conflicts of life. It is at the altar of prayer that we kindle our tapers with divine fire so that we become His witnesses. It is the prayer of faith that brings the power of God. It has been said that “prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.” The opening of the heart to a friend is always done in secret, never in public. There are but few earthly friends to whom we dare open our hearts in strict confidence. But this we can do with perfect safety in our communing with God.

After condemning the public praying of the hypocrites “to be seen of men,” Jesus said: “But thou, when thou prays, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which sees in secret shall reward thee openly.” Matthew 6:6. We are not only to enter the secrecy of the closet, but we are also to close the door, shutting ourselves in and the world out. A closet is “a place of privacy or seclusion.” It carries the meaning of “a secret session or private interview.” Being closeted with a person indicates a private interview, a heart-to-heart conference. The closet is the place where the heart is opened to a friend, revealing chapters in the life unknown to the public. It is the place where lovers reveal to each other the inner secrets of their hearts’ emotions and make pledges of love and loyalty. This is the place for endearing, terms to those we love, including God, whom we should love with supreme affection.

Jesus practiced what He preached. He learned by experience that the secret of power is in “the secret place of the Most High.” His closet was any secret place where He could be “alone” or in “a solitary place.” In prophecy He revealed the secret of His spiritual life and success, in helping the weary and in baffling His enemies. “The Lord, the Eternal, has given Me a well-trained tongue, that I may rightly answer the ungodly; morning by morning He awakens. Me to learn My lesson, and never have I disobeyed, or turned away.” Isaiah 50:4,5, Moffatt.

Although Jesus sometimes spent, the entire night in prayer, He always came forth refreshed and strengthened for the duties of another day. “If the hill back of Nazareth could give back its secret, if the Sea of Galilee could tell what it witnessed, if the desert places around Jerusalem could tell their story, if the Mount of Olives could speak out and tell what transpired there, they would tell us more than anything else, of the prayer life of our Lord. They would reveal its intensity, its unselfishness, its constancy, its godly fear, that made it irresistible.” - JOHN R. MOTT.

It is in the place of secret prayer that we hear the “still small voice” of conscience directing us in the way that we should go. Such a voice can be heard only where all is quiet and still. “Be still, and know that I am God,” is the admonition to the seeker after God. Job said, “There was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God?” Job 4:16, 17. The closet of prayer is the place where other voices and sounds do not distract. Such retreats are necessary in this noisy, restless, busy generation, when most people like the crowds and confusion of congested traffic among the multitudes. But few moderns enjoy the quiet, secret places of meditation and prayer. De Quincey said that “no man will ever develop the possibilities that are in him who does not at least checker his soul with solitude. From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the great Reformation,” and from the same secret place will come the power that will complete the Reformation and usher in the kingdom of glory.

Public Prayer

PRAYERS in connection with public services did not seem to occupy a very prominent place in the ministry of Christ and the apostles. Jesus severely condemned the long and tedious petitions of the scribes and Pharisees, not because they were offered in public, but because they were prompted by the wrong motive. These hypocrites prayed long and loud in order to be seen and heard of men. Jesus also condemned the prayers of the heathen, because they were composed mostly of “vain repetitions” or meaningless phrases repeated in endless monotony. This has been a characteristic of false religions in all ages.

A public prayer should deal with the general needs of the entire congregation without one word or sentence of a personal or private nature, unless prayer for an individual is specifically requested. Only those things should be prayed for in public that are desired and needed by all who hear the prayer. One speaks for all, in order to avoid confusion. If the prayer meets the approval of the congregation by expressing their desires, it should be sent heavenward by the lifting power of hearty “amens.”

“Our” and “us” as used in the model public prayer given by Jesus, indicate that such petitions should be offered only in behalf of those who are present. In a public prayer one person is chosen to speak for the entire congregation. He is the spokesman or mouthpiece for all. The use of I, me, or my is therefore entirely out of place. The house of God is not the place to pray for our families. That should be done at the family altar. The closet is the proper place to pray for our loved ones and those who are at a distance. When we go to the house of God, our prayers should be in behalf of those present and for a present blessing. A public prayer should not cover the needs of the whole world.

“Give us this day” limits public petitions to the present needs of the congregation. Such prayers should not range back over the past or reach forward into the future. They “should be for a present blessing.” The congregation has assembled for a present blessing to meet present needs. The past and the future should be dealt with in private ‘devotions, where God is the only audience. He does not become weary with long private prayers when they come from sincere hearts. Jesus spent whole nights in secret prayer. Public prayers should also be offered so that all present can hear every word. The voice tones must be loud enough to be distinctly heard and understood by all. This makes necessary the lifting up of the head.

The following instruction is needed by all who speak and pray in public: “Let those who pray and those who speak pronounce their words properly, and speak in clear, distinct, even tones. Prayer, if properly offered, is a power for good But prayer is not what it should be, because of the defective voices of those who utter it. Satan rejoices when the prayers offered to God are almost inaudible.” - Gospel Workers, p. 88.

The model public prayer is very short. The praying of it very slowly requires only one minute. Most public prayers are entirely too long and should be cut in half; many of them would be long enough if they were tithed.

Those who pray in public should be brief and come right to the point. It is not necessary to preach the Lord a sermon in a long prayer in order to be heard. Long public prayers are tiresome and inappropriate. They often embrace a great variety of subjects that have no relation to the service or to the needs of the worshipers. The hearers become weary and are glad when the prayer is ended.

Public prayers are often long because the petitioner does not realize, as does the audience, how long he prays. It would be profitable to him as well as to his hearers if he would time himself or have someone do the checking for him. Many would be surprised and shocked at the length of their public prayers. Many public prayers are offered in a dry and sermonizing manner. They are prayed to men and not to God, and do not reach the throne of grace. These long and mechanical prayers weary not only the mortals who are compelled to listen to them but also the Lord and the angels. “You have wearied the Lord with your words” was the charge of God’s prophet against the priests of ancient Israel, and the same rebuke is needed today. (See Malachi 2:17.) Long and wearisome petitions, if they are offered at all, should be confined to the closet. When the Spirit of God comes into our hearts and we experience a revival of primitive godliness, all dry and mechanical formality will be swept away. Long prayers in public usually give evidence of but little praying in secret. There is need of a reformation in the manner of public prayers.

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

Those who pray in public need to repeat the request of the disciples of old, "Lord, teach us to pray?"

Persevering Prayer

AND I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Luke 11:9, 10.

Ask seek, and knock indicate a process of continuous and increasing persistency. They represent prayers whose fervency grows more and more intense. Asking is followed by seeking and then by persistent knocking. Asking requires only the use of the voice. Seeking is asking plus effort. Knocking is asking plus effort plus persistence. We receive many blessings just for asking, 'but others are withheld because something in the life needs to be brought to light and corrected, or because an answer requires time on God's part. The delay is chiefly for our own benefit. The Lord wants to be sure we are in earnest, so He encourages us to come repeatedly and press our claims.

The promise that the door will be opened to those who knock is definite, but it must be the persistent knocking of one who expects to enter. We too often ask for blessings but doubt really expect to receive them. The feeble and halfhearted request is not followed by diligent seeking and persevering knocking. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus is pictured at the door of our hearts. He does not knock and then go away before an answer comes. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." He stays and knocks till the door is opened, asking for entrance all the time He is knocking. Someone has said, "We are to ask with a beggar's humility, to seek with a servant's carefulness, and knock with the confidence of a friend."

Jesus' statement was made to emphasize a parable recorded in Luke 11:5-8. A traveler, making a journey at night, probably to avoid the heat of the day, as is common in the Orient, arrived at the home of a friend at midnight or later, tired and hungry. The householder went to the home of a neighbor to borrow bread, but his request was denied with excuses. The door was shut and locked. But the answer finally came, not on the basis of friendship or neighborliness, but "because of his importunity," or "because of his persistency." (Weymouth.) Persistent knocking brought what he asked and sought for. In some cases the Lord may let us stand and knock for years before the answer comes. George Muller began praying for the conversion of five friends in 1844. Eighteen months passed before the first one was converted, and five years before the second surrendered. The third took his stand at the end of twelve years, and after forty two years of praying every day he said of the other two: "They are not converted yet, but they will be." Before he died they, too, surrendered.

Persistent praying is also emphasized by the parable of the widow and the unjust judge as recorded in Luke 18:1-8. The parable begins with the statement: "And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," or "lose heart." (Weymouth.) Of all classes in the Orient the widow is the most defenseless and oppressed. The widow kept coming to the judge and pleading for the protection that was hers by right. "Give me justice" (Weymouth), she cried. The judge of injustice finally yielded, not because of a love of justice, but "lest by her continual coming she weary me." "Even an unjust and abandoned judge grants a just petition at last out of base motives when it is often urged, to a defenseless person for whom he cares nothing. How much more shall a just and merciful God hear the cry and avenge the cause of those whom He loves." - Cambridge Bible.

The word "avenge" may indicate that the longsuffering of God in this case is not with His elect but with their enemies who oppress them. "Though He seems slow to take action in their behalf," is another translation. The Lord does not punish the enemies of His elect till their cup of iniquity is full. Continuous prayer never wearies the Lord, because "the prayer of the upright is His delight." He has invited us to "pray without ceasing." We need not be afraid of bothering Him with our petitions even though we send them up to Him day and night and in season and out of season. He tells us to give Him no rest day nor night till He answers. (See Isaiah 62:6, 7.)

Sir Walter Raleigh once asked a favor of Queen Elizabeth. She replied, "Raleigh, when will you leave off begging?" He answered, "When Your Majesty leaves off giving." As long as God gives and promises to grant our requests, it is our privilege to continue asking. He is still on the giving hand. Jeremy Taylor said: "Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayers. It must be an intent, zealous, busy operative prayer; for consider what a huge indecency it is that a man should speak to

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

God for a thing that he values not! Our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die, which are more precious than imperial scepters, richer than the spoils of the sea, or the treasures of Indian hills.” Nothing is more pleasing to the Lord than importunate and persistent prayers from sincere hearts. Many of our prayers are not answered because we let go of the arm of the Lord too soon.

Because secret prayer is the soul of religion, it should not be neglected. We should plead for purity of soul and rightness of conduct with prayers that are both earnest and fervent. We should plead as eagerly and persistently as if our physical lives were in danger. We should learn to remain at the altar of prayer until unutterable longings are begotten within our souls for salvation and righteousness, and we have the sweet assurance of pardon and grace. Only those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” are filled or satisfied, and only those who “pray without ceasing” experience the thrill of walking with God.

Prevailing Prayer

AFTER asking Jacob the question, “What is thy name?” the wrestling angel said, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince has thou power with God and with men, and has prevailed.” Genesis 32:27, 28.

God-given names are meaningful, because they are descriptive of character. Name stands for character. We are told that “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.” A change of character demands a change of name; therefore, when Jacob, the false and deceiver, had his character changed, he was given a new name to describe his new character. For this reason, when the redeemed reach the heavenly kingdom, they will be given new names to describe their new characters.

Israel was the new name given to the new born prince, and it belongs to every person who experiences the new birth and becomes a son or prince of the King of glory. This name indicates that its possessor, as a prince, has influence with God and also prevails with his fellow men. A prince has power and influence with both king and people. Because Jacob prevailed, he became a prince and was given a princely name. “Prevail” means “to gain the mastery or upper hand, be victorious, prove superior, triumph, to have effectual influence, to be strong.”

It was prayer that changed the character of Jacob and won for him a place in the royal family of heaven. Only praying people can become sons or princes of God. Only those who prevail with God and man in prayer are given the name Israel. Prayer is the power that moves the arm that moves the world. When by faith we take hold of the strength of the Almighty in prevailing prayer, He will marvelously change the most hopeless and discouraging outlook, and make the future as bright as the promises of God. How wonderfully this was demonstrated in the experience of Jacob. How true it is that “man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” How unfortunate it is that so many wait till they reach their extremity before they give God an opportunity in their lives.

Prayer took Joseph out of the dungeon and placed him virtually on the throne of Egypt. What could have been more disheartening than the experiences, that came to him? The cruelty of his brothers, who threw him into a pit and then sold him as a slave; his prison life in Egypt and the injustice suffered in the home of Potiphar; the negligence of the king’s butler, whom he had helped restore to his former position and royal favor—all was changed by prevailing prayer. Daniel’s deliverance from his enemies and the den of lions is another example of how prayer wonderfully changes things. This is again illustrated in the deliverance of Paul and Silas from the Philippian prison. The outlook seemed hopeless and discouraging, but it was completely changed by prevailing prayer that had in it earthshaking power.

The prophets of Baal prayed long and loud, but their prayers did not prevail to bring fire from heaven to consume their sacrifice. There was no answer to their wailing cries and weird incantations. All day long they begged their false god to hear and answer their petition. Elijah was calm and quiet, and his prayer was short. It is recorded in two verses of sixty-three words, about the length of a night letter. But it was a prevailing prayer. It completely changed the situation and saved the nation of Israel from idolatry and doubtless from complete destruction.

Many of the prevailing prayers recorded in the Scriptures were very short. “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” was the prevailing prayer of the publican that brought him the blessings of justification. The Syrophenician woman prayed, “Lord, help me,” and she got her request. Peter cried out, “Lord, save me,”

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

and the hand of Christ was immediately reached out to save him from a watery grave. The penitent thief on the cross turned his face toward the Son of God and prayed, "Lord, remember me when Thou comes into Thy kingdom? And without a moment's hesitation came back the answer, "You ask to be remembered then, verily thou art assured now." (Rotherham's translation.) With God it is the quality rather than the quantity that counts. We are not heard for our much speaking. It is the prayer of faith and sincerity that prevails with God.

The days of prevailing prayer are not all in the past. The God of the prophets and apostles and saints of old still lives. In fact, during the latter rain of spiritual power and blessings we may expect a repetition of the answered prayers of apostolic days. When the characters of God's people again reflect the image of Jesus fully, so that the human is attune to the divine, prayer will once more move the world. Answers to prayer will then be the usual rather than the unusual. But even now if all the answers to prevailing prayer were known and recorded in a book it would read like a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. The experiences of prevailing prayer that have come from the battle fronts of global war have been very cheering and heart warming to those who long for a revival of primitive godliness and apostolic power. In cockpits and foxholes and rubber rafts men have found God "a very present help in trouble." The extremity of human needs has often turned out to be the opportunity for God to reveal Himself and His power to save even to the uttermost."

Prevailing prayer is reformation power in the individual, the church, or the world. "From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the great Reformation." - The Great Controversy, p. 210. It was the prayers of Luther and his associates that "broke the spell of ages and laid nations subdued at the foot of the cross." In a later reformation the prayers of John Knox shook Scotland and terrified tyrants. The queen of Scotland said, "I am more afraid of John Knox's prayers than all the armies of England." Prevailing prayer was the secret of the great spiritual revivals and reformations under the preaching of Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Moody, and others in more recent days. It will be the impelling power in the full revival and reformation that will transform the Laodicean church from her proud, boastful, and lukewarm state into a spiritually vibrant and triumphant body, going forth in her divinely appointed mission "conquering, and to conquer."

Effectual Prayer

THE apostle declared that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5:16. "The heartfelt supplication of a righteous man exerts a mighty influence," is the rendering by Weymouth, and Moffatt says such prayers "have a powerful effect." This statement emphasizes not only the power of prayer but also the privilege of prayer. The right kind of praying avails or accomplishes much. It "exerts a mighty influence" on both God and man. It works mightily and brings about great changes. The poet truthfully said that "prayer is the power that moves the arm that moves the world."

But this is true only of effectual prayer. An effectual prayer is one "having the necessary power and force to produce the desired effect." It has an effect on the object of our prayers and produces results. The results are the desired effects prayed for; the answer to prayer. Effectual prayer pleads with God with the dogged resolution of the helpless widow urging her case before a heartless judge, and the determined importunity of the man knocking at the door of his neighbor at midnight. The answer is often delayed because we never highly value that which is too cheap and easily attained. "For whatever high reasons, men of prayer must knock and knock-sometimes with bleeding knuckles in the dark," said George A. Buttrick.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of your heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalms 37:4,5. Every effectual prayer will eventually be answered, and every holy desire will someday be gratified. But the psalmist laid down three conditions which we must meet in order to make our prayers effectual. A person must delight himself in the Lord. To him the gospel is indeed "good tidings of great joy." The promise is not for those who find the Christian life a gloomy monotony, a restriction of pleasure. The life must also be fully committed to the Lord so that He can direct the steps in paths of righteousness. Trust must be placed in God rather than in self. Those who have such an experience will know the meaning of answered prayer.

Someone has said that "prayer can do anything God can do." God can do the impossible. The

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

prophet said, "Ah Lord God I behold, Thou has made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." Jeremiah 32:17. The angel Gabriel said to Mary, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Impossible situations are changed by effectual prayer. Such prayers remove impossible mountains of difficulties from the Christian's pathway. In this respect "man's extremity is God's opportunity." The Lord sometimes lets us have our own way till we get into a hopeless situation out of which we cannot extricate ourselves, and when we give up trying and begin trusting, He does the seemingly impossible. Lincoln said, "I often go to God in prayer because I have no other place to go." Prayer is the court of last appeal, where questions are rightly settled and decisions are irreversible.

The changing power of effectual prayer was demonstrated when the people of England went to their knees in response to the king's proclamation of May 26, 1940, calling for a day of prayer and fasting. The results? A fog covered the English Channel and screened the thousands of boats from the enemy aircraft overhead as they sped over the calmest waters known in years in evacuating the 338,000 troops from Dunkirk.

This was only one of the great history-making changes that took place in answer to earnest prayer during World War II. It takes years of practice to produce melodious music, and only the man who is continuous in the practice of prayer can pray effectively. Spasmodic praying gets little or no results. The person who prays only when he is in desperate need or faces a great crisis, with no thought of, or regard for, God at other times, has no basis on which to expect results. The person who walks with God and maintains his communion in days of prosperity will have no difficulty getting the needed help in times of adversity. Prayer, in order to be effectual, must come out of hearts that are honest and sincere. The hypocrite may stage an act in public praying, but it is hard to think of posing or of insincerity in connection with secret prayer. To the self-righteous the gate of effectual prayer is closed. "Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard." - Christ's Object Lessons, p. 174.

We should never forget that effectual "prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence." - Steps to Christ, p. 99. It is our privilege to make greater use of this key than we have done in the past and thus know by experience that kind of praying that "avails much." Let us seek the spiritual experience that is essential if our prayers are to exert a mighty influence on both God and man.

Fervent Prayer

IN ORDER for prayer to be effectual it must be fervent. It must be sincere or heartfelt. It must be earnest, ardent, eager, and animated. "Fervent" comes from the Latin *fervio* or *fervens*, the same word from which we get the word fever. It indicates warmth of devotion. A fervent prayer is one that comes from the heart. "To pray without soul-hunger and living faith, avails nothing." - The Desire of Ages, p. 347. The prayers that will avail much must be motivated by fervency of spirit.

Jesus said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled," or "completely satisfied." (Weymouth.) The promise of the filling or imparting of righteousness by faith will be fulfilled only to those who fervently pray for this experience. Many persons are in a quandary as to how to receive the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ. It is as simple as eating when hungry and drinking when thirsty. When a person is hungry or thirsty, it is not necessary to present an elaborate discourse on how to become filled. It is not necessary to explain to starving people how to satisfy their desires for food and water when these things are available. Even a child knows how to do that. If men and women were really hungry for spiritual things, the filling would be a simple matter. The real difficulty with modern Christendom is set forth by "the faithful and true Witness" in His message to the Laodiceans. "Because thou says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. And knows not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked." Revelation 3:17. How can anyone

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

expect to obtain what is asked for in prayer as long as he feels in “need of nothing,” and is perfectly satisfied with his spiritual state?

D. L. Moody quotes Bishop Hall as saying in regard to fervency of spirit in prayers: “An arrow, if it be drawn up but a little way, goes not far; but if it be pulled up to the head, flies swiftly and pierces deep. Thus prayer, if it be only dribbled forth from careless lips, falls at our feet. It is the strength of ejaculation and strong desire which sends it to heaven and makes it pierce the clouds. It is not the arithmetic of our prayers; how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they be. Nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be. Nor the logic of our prayers, how argumentative they may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be; nor even the divinity of our prayers, how good the doctrine may be. Which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is what avails much.” - *Prevailing Prayer*, p. 81.

Mr. Moody quotes another as saying: “As a painted fire is no fire, a dead man no man, so a cold prayer is no prayer. In a painted fire there is no heat, in a dead man there is no life; so in a cold prayer there is no omnipotency, no devotion, no blessing. Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings; they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers do always freeze before they get to heaven. Oh, that Christians would chide themselves out of their cold prayers, and chide themselves into a better and warmer frame of spirit, when they make their supplications to the Lord.”-*Ibid.*, p. 82.

Fervency does not mean mere emotion and noise and excitement. The prophets of Baal worked themselves up into a frenzy of emotion. They shouted long and loud for their gods to answer, but there was no response. Mere emotion is the counterfeit of fervency of spirit, and many are deceived into thinking it is the genuine. Some modern religionists remind one of the prophets of Baal, and act as if God were deaf or answered only the persons who make the greatest noise. “Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love.” - *Acts of the Apostles*, Page 51.

Emotional preaching and praying is thus contrasted with fervency by Edward M. Bounds: “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 an 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 latter 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 fervor and softness excited by a pathetic or emotional sermon may look like the movements of the divine unction, but they have no pungent, penetrating, heartbreaking force. No heart-healing balm is there in these surface, sympathetic, emotional movements; they are not radical, neither sin searching nor sin curing.” - *Power Through Prayer*, pp. 19, 20, 95, 96.

Emotionalism, the counterfeit of fervency, usually manifests itself in praying even more than in preaching. Fanatical religious groups are usually eloquently noisy and demonstrative in their praying. They seem to be ignorant of the prophecy of Jesus saying, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” Isaiah 42:2. “He shall not be loud and noisy, He shall not shout in public,” is the Moffatt translation. How true it is that “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3:4. But a meek and quiet spirit may also be fervent. It ‘is the “effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man” that “avails much.”

Prayer That Avails Much

THE effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16. God never makes an unconditional promise. Many fervent prayers are never answered, because fervency alone is not enough. After the door of opportunity is closed forever, many will knock and fervently pray, “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” but the answer will be, “I know you not whence you are; depart from Me, all you workers of

The Power Of Prevailing Prayer

iniquity.” These prayers will be very fervent. Those who thus pray will be deadly in earnest. People in deep trouble, brought on by their own folly, frequently offer the most fervent prayers, which are often mingled with bitter tears of regret, and yet they are not answered. Heathen people, who are devotees of false religions, are often very earnest and fervent in their petitions to their gods. The fervency of some religious cults which counterfeit the genuine is positively amazing.

The fervent prayers must come from “a righteous man” before they can avail much. All other prayers fall short of their mark. They never reach their destination. They fall dead at the feet of the petitioner. Their wings are clipped so that they cannot fly heavenward. Not only do they not reach God, but they are an offense to Him. “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Proverbs 28:9.

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalms 66:18. “Regard” means not only to see or recognize its presence but to respect, cherish, or esteem it. It is really a pet sin to which the sinner wishes to cling. The person who loves or cherishes sin cannot know availing prayer. “One saint, if he were right, could move the arm of God; but a multitude together if they were wrong, would be weak, and could effect nothing,” declared a godly writer.

The following texts also give reason for unanswered prayer: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.” Isaiah 59:1,2. “Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but He will not hear them: He will even hide His face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves in all their doings.” Micah 3:4. The most ardent and fervent prayers by the most emotional petitioners will avail nothing when there is known sin in the heart and life. Nothing but sincerity and righteousness can influence God. He cannot be persuaded by long and noisy prayers or bribed by rapturous feelings or influenced by emotional gymnastics or flattering platitudes.

The prayers “of a righteous man” that avail much, or “exert a mighty influence” (Weymouth), are referred to in the next verses in the book of James: “Elijah 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 heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” James 5:17,18.

The prayers of Elijah are given as an example of effectual, fervent, and availing prayer. At the time these prayers were offered, ancient Israel had entered into a terrible apostasy. Baal worship had almost entirely supplanted the worship of Jehovah. Elijah’s prayers saved Israel and thus had a telling effect on the future history of the nation and the world. And yet, he “was a man subject to like passions as we are.” He was neither a superman nor an angel. He had the same sinful flesh, suffered the same temptations, was cursed with the same besetting sins, and met the same discouragement that beset us. How encouraging are these facts!

Elijah was a type of those who are to proclaim the last warning message to the world “in the spirit and power of Elias.” He was a reformer, and has been called “The Martin Luther of ancient Israel.” His message was given in the time of a great apostasy such as is taking place in modern Christendom. Modernistic preaching is today leading the Christian world back into a paganism similar to that which cursed ancient Israel.

Elijah was translated, and at the transfiguration was present to represent those who will enter the kingdom of glory at the second advent without tasting of death. The fifth chapter of James is essentially a message for us at this time, when God’s people should learn the meaning of effectual, fervent, and availing prayer, as we face the final crisis. We cannot preach “in the spirit and power of Elias” until we learn to pray “in the spirit and power of Elias.” Then our effectual, fervent prayers, will avail much in the closing work of the great gospel commission, for it is from the secret place of prayer that will again come the power that will shake the world in the completion of the Reformation.

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