

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke 18:1.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
James 5:16.

We will never pray as we should until we see prayer as a necessity, indispensable to the life we have undertaken to live.

I. It Is A Precious Privilege.

What an unspeakable privilege! To enter the presence of God is an incomparable privilege. It brings one into fellowship with God.

What an emptiness there is in our lives when we fail to pray! We grow cold and worldly, stay away from the services of the church, become highly critical of everyone, especially of the pastor and leaders in the church. We say, "The sermons are too long and uninteresting," "The deacons are money-grabbers," and "the church members in general are hypocrites." Those who develop this attitude and cultivate these habits begin to doubt their salvation, reach a state of misery and dissatisfaction with themselves that is pitiable beyond words. The cure for such backsliding is prayer.

Man only is permitted to ask of God. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50:15). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Prayer is the greatest resource of any life. The mightiest thing any Christian can do is to pray. One trembles to think what would happen if God's people should really give themselves to prayer.

Prayer is the pleasant, precious and present possession of the children of God. Prayer lifts us up to God's hilltops, where we can drink in the pure air of God's country, where no contaminated atmosphere finds a place. By prayer a common man is made into an uncommon one. To have an almighty Friend to Whom we can bring all of our fears, longings and desires is a privilege of inestimable value.

II. It Is A Personal Duty.

1. One we owe to God.

God, our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, has commanded it. We should honor Him as our Father. What is a father for? To provide for his children. This our Heavenly Father seeks the privilege of doing, and has appointed prayer to that end. Matthew 7:7-11. God wants to be to us as a Father if only we will be to Him as children, and ask. But if we do not ask, what? We are preventing Him from functioning as a Father. A prayerless life dishonors the Father-son relationship.

2. One we owe to others.

It brings so many blessings to those for whom we pray. The way to make a minister powerful is by praying for him. The way to reach the lost is by the throne of God. Why do we see so few passing from death unto life? It is because of the lack of definite and believing prayer to this end. That lack of prayer is rooted in a deep-seated sluggishness of desire. Prayer is a duty we owe to others.

3. One we owe to ourselves.

Prayer is to the soul what breathing is to the body, what steam is to the engine, what gasoline is to the car, and what water is to the garden. It is as necessary to the soul as food is to the body. Through it we get renewed strength, heavenly wisdom, greater love, and a closer walk with God. However, we should never forget that prayer is costly.

(1) It costs time.

Time is needed to prepare our hearts, to banish our worldly thoughts, and to compose our wayward hearts. Time spent in prayer is always profitable. We must take time to pray.

(2) It costs thought.

(3) It costs toil.

It really costs us physical energy to pray aright. While it takes something out of us physically, prayer always contributes to us spiritually. Satan will use every means possible to keep us from praying.

III. It Pleases God.

When God's children, with a keen sense of personal weakness, need and dependence, call upon Him in earnest prayer He is highly pleased. It brings great joy to His heart when His children pray.

IV. It Procures So Many Blessings From God.

1. Prayer secures material and temporal blessings.

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

2. Prayer secures spiritual blessings.

Prayer renews the inner man in peace and strength. "For nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Prayer enables us to win the victory over worry and impatience, and to develop the Christian graces of character. Prayer is successful when it brings our wills into conformity with God's will. He desires our highest happiness and greatest usefulness. Prayer releases God's power through us upon others. It enables Him to do in us, for us and through us wonderful things which otherwise would not be possible. That is why Dwight L. Moody said, "Give your life over to Christ. He can do more with it than you can."

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." By prayer we harness God's omnipotence to our impotence. Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God.

When a Christian prays, something happens. This is not an imagination, but a glowing reality. When Moses prayed in that great day of Israel's need, the Divine hand was very soon manifest, and something happened. When Daniel prayed with his window opened toward Jerusalem, something happened. When Hezekiah laid Sennacherib's insulting letter before God, 185,000 corpses became the eloquent demonstration that something had indeed happened. When the saints of the early church cried unto God for Peter's deliverance from prison, it was but a very few minutes until the knock of the liberated prisoner on the door without became the astonishing revelation that something had happened. When a Christian gets on his knees, the angels and the demons know that something is going to happen. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (I John 5: 14-15).

Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Mary, Queen of Scots, declared that "she was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox than she was of all the armies of England." Surely then there is a power in prayer to be reckoned with that most of us have not yet realized. It is the power of the Holy Spirit pulsating in the life of the individual who is in tune with God. In Exodus 17 we read that Israel fought with the Amalekites, and as long as Moses' hands were held up before God, Israel prevailed. Elijah prevailed with God on Mount Carmel because of God's willingness to hear and answer prayer. George Mueller of Bristol, England, asked God to help him provide for thousands of homeless children. God heard his prayer and year after year supplied the need of that great orphanage.

"Prayer changes things." Prayer can change your life. Prayer changes circumstances. We accomplish more by praying about our circumstances than by complaining about them. Prayer will conquer adverse circumstances for us.

We need to pray for the salvation of souls. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Paul said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." John Knox cried, "Give me Scotland or I die." Hudson Taylor said, "The nearest way to a man's heart is by God's teaching, our visits, and our entreaties, but the Spirit of God in answer to our prayers will bring them to their knees in conviction and conversion. The ages have proved that intercession is the mightiest weapon God has put into the hands of His children. Mueller prayed every day for sixty years for the souls of two men. As he lay on his deathbed one of them was saved, and the other was saved after Mueller passed away. God was richly honored by such persistent faith.

God's child can conquer everything by prayer, but he has no power without it. Dr. William Evans related an experience in a hotel in Great Britain. He said that he was unable to get the gas to light in a grate on a cold day. It was the law of the gas company that a shilling had to be placed in a certain slot before the gas would come on and heat could be produced. It was either a shilling or no heat. With us, it is prayer or no power.