

Prevailing Prayer

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"Watch ye therefore, and pray always," is the injunction of Christ to His disciples. Again we read in the inspired Word, "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

God has made it our duty to pray. The riches of the universe belong to Him. He has all temporal and spiritual treasures at His command, and can supply every want from His abundant fulness. We receive our breath from Him; every temporal blessing that we enjoy is His gift. We are dependent upon Him not only for temporal blessings, but for grace and strength to keep us from falling under the power of temptation. We daily need the Bread of Life to give us spiritual strength and vigor, just as much as we need food to sustain our physical strength and give us firm muscles. We are compassed with weakness and infirmities, doubts and temptations; but we can come to Jesus in our need, and He will not turn us away empty. He invites, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is no doubtful, uncertain promise, but a positive one. If we come to Him, we shall not be disappointed. Yet how unwilling we seem to accept the gracious invitation. When in trouble, we too often go for help to our brethren, who are no wiser nor stronger than ourselves; but if we would go to Jesus, if we would take our troubles to Him in prayer, we should find rest, and peace, and courage. The wisdom that God gives is unerring; His strength is sufficient for all our needs. Let us lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus, and according to His promise. He will take the weary load, and encircle us in the arms of His love.

The reason that we do not realize greater help is because there is lack of earnest, fervent devotion. Jesus reproved the Pharisees for drawing near to God with their mouth, and honoring Him with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." We must have a deep, earnest sense of our needs. We must feel our weakness and our dependence upon God, and come to Him with contrition of soul and brokenness of heart. Our petitions must be offered in perfect submission; every desire must be brought into harmony with the will of God, and His will must be done in us. We must not pray in a doubting, half-hearted manner, but with full assurance of faith.

When we come to Him in this manner, Jesus will listen to our prayers, and will answer them; but if we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cherish any darling sin, we may be assured that no blessing will be given in response to our prayers.

Faith takes God at His word, with or without feeling. It "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We can believe our fellowmen, and can we not trust the word of God? When we go to Him for wisdom or grace, we are not to look to ourselves to see if He has given us a special feeling as an assurance that He has fulfilled His word. Feeling is no criterion. Great evils have resulted when Christians have followed feeling. How do I know that Jesus hears my prayers?--I know it by His promise. He says He will hear the needy when they cry unto Him, and I believe His word. He has never said to the "seed of Jacob, seek ye Me in vain."

If we walk in the light, we may come to the throne of grace with holy boldness. We may present the promises of God in living faith, and urge our petitions. Although we are weak, and erring, and unworthy, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." But too often our prayers are molded by coldness and backsliding. Those who do not deny self and lift the cross of Christ, will have no courage to approach a heart-searching God. We must learn to watch unto prayer, and to be importunate. We must accustom ourselves to seek divine guidance through prayer; we must learn to trust in Him from whom our help cometh. Our desires should be unto God; our souls should go out after Him, and their attitude should always be that of supplication.

When we have offered our petition once, we must not then abandon it, but say, as did Jacob when he wrestled all night with the angel, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me, " and like him we shall prevail.

There are many who are surrounded with clouds of darkness. They try to do something themselves, some great and good work which will win the favor of God and make them happy, but they neglect the very work that they should do. But the path of happiness is the path of obedience. We should in no case blind our eyes to our true condition, and then pray in a loose, general manner. Prayers of this kind rise no higher than the petitioner's head, and bring no answer of mercy, because they are dictated by no sense of need. Says the apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Inquire into the character of your thoughts, purposes, temper, words, and deeds. Compare your experience with the declarations of Scripture, and see whether you are gathering with Christ or scattering abroad. See if your life testifies that you are in the faith.

We should search the Scriptures daily; for the Word of God is our unerring guide. We are here in a world of doubt and skepticism. The law of God is made void, unbelief seems to be in the very air we breathe; and to resist all these influences, and battle successfully against the powers of darkness, requires strong faith and earnest prayer. But amid all these opposing influences, we may repose in God with perfect confidence. I once read of an eagle that had left her home in the Alps, and clouds dark and heavy intervened between her and her home in the towering cliffs. She seemed bewildered, and with loud screams flew first one way and then another against the over-hanging clouds. Suddenly, with a shrill scream of determination, she darted upward through the dense clouds into the clear sky above. The clouds were beneath her, and she was again in her mountain home. And so may we rise above the clouds of skepticism, and dwell in the clear sunshine of God's presence.

It is only by watching unto prayer, and the exercise of living faith, that the Christian can preserve his integrity in the midst of the temptations that Satan brings to bear upon him. But "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Talk to your heart constantly the language of faith: "Jesus said He would receive me, and I believe His word. I will praise Him; I will glorify His name." Satan will be close by your side to suggest that you do not feel any joy. Answer him: "'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' I have everything to be glad of; for I am a child of God. I am trusting in Jesus. The law of God is in my heart; none of my steps shall slide."

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