

While it Is Day – C. J. Ritchie

The Example of Jesus [in Prayerful Work]

The life of Jesus furnishes us with the best guidance for our daily living. The Savior spent much time in prayer, meditation, and study. Often He arose a great while before day in order to be alone with His heavenly Father. When faced with a crisis He sometimes spent the whole night in prayer. From these seasons of refreshing communion Jesus came forth to minister to suffering, needy humanity. He “went about doing good.” Acts 10:38. Here was balance. Here was purpose. “The life must be like Christ’s life, between the mountain and the multitude.” - Steps to Christ, page 106.

We greatly need to spend more time than we do in prayer. We need to pray more earnestly. There is a danger that even though we do not use a prayer book, we may lapse into formalism in prayer. Perhaps in all too many lives the morning and evening prayer runs something like this: “Loving heavenly Father, bless Mary and the children and me today. Keep us from harm and danger, and supply our needs, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.” Up from our knees we rise, to dress and hurry away to work. Better this than no prayer at all; but how much strength for the duties of the day, how much guidance for the unknown path, how much power for service and help to resist temptation, do we expect to receive in a mechanical, half minute prayer? While we are not heard for our “much speaking,” there is a distinct ratio between genuine prayer and divine power. One has written, “Much prayer-much power; little prayer-little power; no prayer-no power.” We understand prayer to be in the last analysis communion or fellowship with Jesus. And the spirit of fellowship cannot be cultivated in a brief moment.

While it is true that we need to pray more, and more earnestly, yet we are not called to become hermits, monks, or cloistered nuns. The purpose of a life of prayer is to enable us to be better witnesses for the Savior. The danger of a life of prayer without active service is well stated in Steps to Christ, page 106: “He who does nothing but pray will soon cease to pray, or his prayers will become a formal routine. When men take themselves out of social life, away from the sphere of Christian duty and cross bearing; when they cease to work earnestly for the Master, who worked earnestly for them, they lose the subject matter of prayer, and have no incentive to devotion.”

I sincerely hope that I will not be misunderstood in what I am about to write. I recognize that one of the greatest needs in the church today and in our individual lives is the need for more earnest prayer. We need to spend more time alone with God. We need to gather together in little groups to pray for individuals. There needs to be a much larger attendance at prayer meetings, and far more should be done about prayer bands. But the idea that we must draw apart in some secluded spot and remain on our knees, hour after hour, and day after day, until we receive some demonstration of power, is not based upon Scripture or spirit of prophecy instruction. Perhaps this concept has come about because of a misunderstanding of the Savior’s instruction to His disciples. Jesus, addressing His followers, said, “Tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:49. Observe first of all that the instruction was “Tarry in Jerusalem,” not, “Stay closeted in the upper room.” It is completely erroneous to suppose that the disciples stayed on their knees in the upper room for ten days. The same Gospel writer, recording what they did after that meeting with the Savior, states, “And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” Verses 52, 53.

His followers were not to leave the “city of Jerusalem” until they were imbued with power from on high. Undoubtedly they prayed much, undoubtedly they made wrongs right; for they were of one accord. But they also went back and forth to the temple to pray and witness for their Master. It was not a program of staying on their knees until something happened. Regarding the danger of such a course we read, “On the other hand, there are some who, instead of wisely improving present opportunities, are idly waiting for some special season of spiritual refreshing by which their ability to enlighten others will be greatly increased. They neglect present duties and privileges, and allow their light to burn dim, while they look forward to a time when, without any effort on their part, they will be made the recipients of special blessings, by which they will be transformed and fitted for service.” - The Acts of the Apostles, Page 54.

A further statement from Testimonies, Volume 1, Page 261, adds, “I was shown God’s people waiting for some change to take place a compelling power to take hold of them. But they will be

disappointed, for they are wrong. They must act, they must take hold of the work themselves and earnestly cry to God for a true knowledge of themselves. The scenes which are passing before us are of sufficient magnitude to cause us to arouse and urge the truth home to the hearts of all who will listen. The harvest of the earth is nearly ripe."