

PRAYER

Transforming Truths

Article - 7



PRAYER

CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10

BLESSINGS DERIVED FROM CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER

Our subject will be considered under the seven following headings:

- (1) Continuance in prayer.
- (2) What is necessary for enabling us to attain to this continuance in prayer?
- (3) Results of continuance in prayer as a habit.
- (4) Faithful expectation in prayer.
- (5) The results of expectation in prayer.
- (6) Intensity in prayer.
- (7) The results -- rest, joy, and peace as found in Him, in Christ our Redeemer.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanks-giving," says St. Paul to the Colossians. --Colossians 4:2.

"Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and lie shall hear my voice," says the Psalmist. -- Psalm 55:17.

We will now consider for a short time continuance in prayer -- continuance in prayer as a habit, and continuance in prayer at any one time.

CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER

What is this continuance in prayer, as a habit?

It is the habit of speaking to God at all times, and in all places; when there are immediate occasions for prayer, and also when there are not -- not merely saying a prayer, or even praying in the morning when we get up and in the evening when we retire, but it is a continual attitude of prayer. Prayer may be made in one short sentence, or in a word, or even without uttering a word at all. This continuance in prayer is independent of place as well as of time. If we are dependent on place we will be hindered in continuance of prayer. We can learn a lesson from a story of an old minister's servant.

A number of ministers were assembled for a discussion of different questions, and among others it was asked how the command to "pray without ceasing" could be complied with, various suppositions were expressed, and at length one of the numbers was appointed to write an essay upon it, to be read at the next meeting. This discussion was heard by a plain, sensible servant girl, and she exclaimed...

Girl: "What! a whole month wanted to tell the meaning of that text! It is one of the easiest in the Bible."

Minister: "Well, well Mary, what can you say about it? Let us know how you understand it. Can you pray all the time?"

Girl: "Oh, yes, sir."

Minister: "What, When you have so many things to do?"

Girl: "Why, sir, the more I have to do, the more I pray."

Minister: "Indeed; well, Mary, do let us know how it is, for most people think otherwise."

Girl: "Well, sir," "when I first open my eyes in the morning I pray: 'Lord open the eyes of my understanding,' and while I am dressing I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of righteousness; and when I have washed me, I ask for the washing of regeneration; and as I begin my work I pray that I may have strength equal to my day. When I begin to kindle the fire, I pray that God's work may revive in my soul; and as I sweep out the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all impurities; and while partaking of breakfast I desire to be fed with the manna, and the sincere milk of the Word, and as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my Father; and so on all day. Everything I do furnishes me with a thought for prayer."

Minister: "Enough, enough... these things are revealed to babes, and hid from the wise and prudent. Go on, Mary," said he, "Pray without ceasing."

And for us, dear brethren, let us remember that He has said, "The meek will he guide in judgment."

It is the spirit of man that prays. The spirit may be quietly before the throne, while the body may be whirling amid the noise of travel or when walking along the roads, even amid the people which throng the streets. God will accept real prayer, no matter from what locality it is sent up, no matter at what time. Let us realize, brethren that prayer may be made in every time, in every place, by us.

The spirit can come into an attitude of prayer when the body cannot. He who is able to continue in prayer knows this. He prays at all times and in all places.

We know and experimentally realize that all things must be brought to God in prayer, and that all things may be brought to Him in prayer, and we will never be at a loss for matter for prayer. We will never say, I have nothing particular to pray about. There is never a day passes that does not afford special matter for prayer. Dangers are apprehended, vexations have to be borne, we have some spiritual comfort and blessing to be obtained in which we feel in sore need, so as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," so out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh in prayer.

But even though we may have no pressing need, we find abundance about which to continue in prayer. We long to be holy, so we lift up our hearts and say, "O Lord, may Thy Spirit sanctify me, and make me more like Christ." We want to have more love for Christ and we say, "O Lord, I cannot love Thee by myself; O make me love as Thou Thyself wouldst have me love." We can ask the Lord to prosper His cause; and we may ask perhaps as we are walking to a home where we are to call on a sick person, "Lord make my call acceptable and useful."

Dear brethren, may we know more and more of this continuance in prayer. May the Lord enable us all to say with the Psalmist, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice."

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR ENABLING US TO ATTAIN TO THIS CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER

We have seen something of what it means to continue in prayer, and we will now note, What is necessary for enabling us to attain to this continuance.

One very important point is the realization of our privilege -- to know that we are privileged to take a higher stand than that of a mere worshipper, that we may hold communion with God.

The unconverted may worship, but higher than that they cannot go. These may feel that God ought to be worshipped as the supreme being in the universe, but they do not have the privilege of communion. 'Worship is a duty, communion is a privilege. We who are enjoying the privilege of communion with God are in a far higher position than that of worshipper; and the realization of this will be a great help to our continuance in prayer.

The deepest reverence and awe will fill the mind of one who knows the Holy One aright. Before Him even the angels veil their faces, and thus we who continue in prayer will always keep in mind, and we will never presume to be irreverent in our privilege to commune with God. When we know that we are sons of God we shall act toward our Father as children toward a parent. A child from the simple realization of his connection with his parent comes to him at all times, and asks him about everything. His reverence for his father is not lessened by the fact that he may thus come. The father does not require set forms and ceremonies to be gone through with before the child can open his lips. Were this the case, the child would very likely stay away when there were only little things to speak about, or ask for, and would only go to him with the great things. We know, dear brethren, what serious results might come from this. Great evils often come from small beginnings. The little things we might have spoken to him about, may be the very beginnings from which evil might develop. When the first pains of a child are brought to the notice of a tender parent, he takes measures that may avert a serious illness and much after suffering. And when we do not take these little things to our Father in prayer, the result is that we take these matters into our own hands and do them wrongly, or without a blessing, and trouble or loss is sure to come. A few words of prayer, even a look to God upon the subject might have made the matter right. These were not given because of any unbelief, but because of a want of realizing this privilege of prayer. Let us remember, brethren, that we may fail in this point, even though we may be acquainted, and that practically with many of the other privileges of worship. For example, we may see clearly that God as our Father is educating us when He sends us trials, and that He will in a general way, make all needful provisions for us, but we fail in this particular point, of realizing our privilege of taking everything to God in prayer.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear,
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to God in prayer."

Let us endeavor more and more to realize the privilege connected with sonship with God; let us remember that we have been called to a position far higher than that of worshipper. This is a far closer position which privileges us to talk with God, to take everything to Him, at every time, and in every place.

That, however, which above all things will enable us to continue in prayer is the operation of the Holy Spirit upon our minds and hearts. God's Holy Spirit operates in many different ways. It works upon our reasoning, our intellectual powers, our imagination, and also upon our habits.

Has the habit of our mind been wrought upon by the Holy Spirit? If the mind's bent has been fixed upon God, that in itself will be a great stimulant to continuous prayer. The mind thus sanctified will naturally have holy thoughts and will continually be in an attitude of prayer. Prayer will thus be

not an effort, but an overflowing of the mind. We have the promise that "He will keep in perfect peace those whose mind is stayed upon Him." No doubt there will be times when prayer will require intense effort; times of special temptation, special sorrow, or special conflict.

RESULTS OF CONTINUANCE OF PRAYER

We will now look into the results of continuance of prayer as a habit.

One result has reference to what we have just spoken about. Continuance in prayer will help to keep up the spiritual tone of our mind. Do we not day by day find ourselves prone to slip somewhat perhaps from our spiritual attainment? We seem like some stringed instrument, the tendency which is to decline from concert pitch. Unless the body be continually refreshed by breathing in pure air it will droop. So our spiritual life is as dependent upon refreshment as is our body, and this refreshment comes through prayer. We cannot become strangers to the throne of grace. Nothing pleases Satan more than to intercept our prayers. He tries to disturb our regular times of prayer if he can, and if failing in that he will try to make us strangers to continuous prayer.

How often in daily life do we find that we insensibly become almost strangers to those we once knew well, but frequent intercourse has been gradually broken off, and as time rolled on we missed the accustomed intercourse less and less. So Satan tries to make the child of God a stranger to the Throne of Grace, knowing that the heart will become gradually less willing to talk with God. The confidence of his heart will decrease, and as it becomes more and more reserved, it will turn in more upon itself. It may have the feeling that it has something to do, something to overcome, before it can speak to God. We may be assured, brethren, that the feeling of strangeness is one that grows rapidly.

Another good result of continuance in prayer is this: We can bring multitudes of things to God as they arise, which otherwise we might have forgotten. Little things are soon forgotten, and yet, as we have already seen, they are often of great importance. They are gone from our minds without even having been committed to God, but though gone from our memories, they have not gone from the field of action. They have linked themselves with other things for the production of some result.

Another result of this continuance in prayer is that we shall have a blessing in special acts. When we are about to do a thing, if we ask a blessing upon it, and if that thing be not evil, we shall receive a blessing. We should seek for special, as well as general blessings. Let us strive to have the spirit of continuous prayer and say, "Lord help me in this; Lord avert that," and the special blessing will surely come.

Thus if we are living in supplication, we shall also live in giving of thanks. No matter how great or how varied our need, we shall always have a resource. We shall have a "very present help," and amid all the changes and varied experiences of life we will have that peace which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and call aloud, and He shall hear my voice."

FAITHFUL EXPECTATION IN PRAYER

Faithful expectation in prayer is the subject which we will consider for a little while now.

What is it to expect in prayer? It is to believe that an answer will come -- to be looking out for an answer, and to be patient in expecting it. A great many prayers are offered without any positive expectation that they will be answered. How different do we act toward God and man. When we go to our fellow man for anything we expect to receive it, or hope to. But when we pray to God, and that oft times for definite things, we do not always think about the coming of an answer. We are

not really on the look out for it. We have many precious promises in the Holy Scriptures that prayer will be answered. We will quote a few.

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them." -- Mark 11:24.

"Ask, and it shall be given you." -- Matthew 7:7.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do." -- John 14:13.

"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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." -- John 1:5, 6.

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." -- John 15:7.

We see here that there are conditions attached -- Faith, and abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us. We are to pray in the name of Christ, and to pray in the name of Christ is to pray in the mind and will and spirit of Christ. The answers to our prayers then is not dependent upon the greatness or the smallness of our requests, but upon the impulse which prompts them. If that impulse proceeds from our own will, the prayer is not in the name of Christ. But when the impulse to prayer is derived from an inward Divine operation, it is truly in the name of Christ, and will have His answer. Because we are "dead with Him," we shall be careful to bring the required sacrifice of our Christian covenant -- a crucified will.

Sanctified reasoning upon the character and attributes of God also strengthen our expectation in prayer. We know that God is true. He cares for the true interests of His children. He wishes them to have everything that is good for them; His heart's affection is set upon them. The consciousness of another's love makes us hold to ask from those on earth. How much more should it from the One in heaven. Never was love so true, so steady, so large as His. He is our Father, and we His children, and we should expect from His love just as a child expects from the parental love.

He is also omnipotent. He has all resources at His command. He can make "all things work together for good to them that love Him." God is generous; He loves to give; He is always giving. He gave His only begotten Son to die for us, and "how shall He not with Him freely give us all things."

Let us hear what He says in Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that they may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." When Jesus fed the thousands, the fragments exceeded the original provision.

When bread was rained from heaven upon the multitude in the wilderness, it fell in profusion, so that there was abundance for all. The Epistles are full of the generosity of God; we read of "the exceeding riches of His grace," and "the exceeding greatness of His power," and of the "grace of the Lord exceeding abundant," and of the "exceeding great and precious promises."

So, brethren, it would greatly help in our expectation in prayer if we call to mind the attributes of God, meditate upon His character in connection with our need. If when our faith begins to stagger, we bring these thoughts to our mind of God's character and attributes in all probability our faith would rise, our expectation would be strengthened, and an earnest reality would enter into our prayer which otherwise might be wanting.

RESULTS OF EXPECTATION IN PRAYER

We consider next, the Results of expectation in prayer.

"One result will be more precision of meaning in our prayers. There are many things which we think we ought to pray for which our spiritual knowledge tells us that a child of the Lord should desire. But do we really desire them? Are we really anxious to get them when we ask for them in prayer? And are we really anxious that God should grant our requests in His own way? When we pray we must leave the method of the answer with Him. If we have learned to expect in prayer, to believe that an answer will really come, we shall surely be precise in what we ask of God. We are precise in our dealings with our fellow men, we do not go to him with a meaningless petition for something we do not want. So, dear brethren, let us not deal with God with less earnestness and reality than we employ with our fellowman. When we pray to Him let us mean what we say. Let us offer no prayer in which we are not willing and desirous that God shall take us at our word.

Another good result of this expectation in prayer will be a greater readiness to pray.

If we believe that God will grant our petitions, we shall surely be all the more ready to come and make them. We are very loath to go and ask a favor where we think we are likely to be denied. We have not the heart to go and make our petition. But if we really expect from God, we shall be very ready to come and ask for what we need. One cause of backwardness in prayer is our doubt and uncertainty about getting an answer. These take away our cheerful readiness in prayer, and make it hard labor instead of a blessed privilege.

A further good result will be less expectation from, and leaning upon man, seeing we have the everlasting God Himself. There is always danger of trusting in human flesh instead of in the living God. So we will tell our needs to God and expect an answer, knowing Him to be both willing and able to answer our prayers. We will not lean upon man.

This expectation in prayer will make our minds much more cheerful after the prayer has been offered up. We shall unburden ourselves by putting our care upon God. The very fact of committing our troubles to Him will give us comfort and peace. We can say, "My God will take this matter in hand, and arrange everything for my best good. He will bring His wisdom and resources to hear on my behalf. My care is cast upon Him."

I wonder how often we have felt as sad after prayer as we were before we went to commit our trouble to the Lord?? We may have taken our burden to the Throne and brought it away with us again. If we laid any, we laid only a part on God. We may have kept our burden strapped tightly to us, thinking it too much to expect God to bear it. But let us not do this. if we have gone to the throne with tears in our eyes, and with heavy tread hearing care upon our hearts, let us strive to come forth with elastic step, cheerful in the expectation of our prayer being answered.

It may be thought by some, Will not such feelings as these take away some of the energy in the use of means? Far from it. A further result of expectation in prayer will give more energy in the use of means.

The child of God knows that while God can work with-out means, yet He in almost all instances works by then:. It is very seldom, too, that the means are not clearly indicated. We should pray that they may be so, and when we have thus prayed, and they are manifest to us, we shall work with zeal and energy.

So, dear brethren, let us expect an answer to our prayers. Take up the Psalmist's "I will" and say, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and call aloud; and He shall hear my voice." But we who say this with the Psalmist

must not only believe that an answer will come, but must further be on the lookout for an answer. It is possible for us to send forth our petitions and think no more about them, as though it were a matter of indifference whether an answer came or not. In such cases it may be that some things have come in answer to prayer which we have failed to recognize as having come in that way, and for which we have never thanked our Heavenly Father.

It is not honoring God to pray and yet not look out for an answer to our prayer. God is robbed of His glory when He gives and we do not recognize what we have received as His gift. But we must be patient in expectation. This patience in expectation is of the utmost importance. God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and many of our prayers are not answered at just the time we had thought, nor in just the way we had thought. We may expect our patience to be tried by many temptations. God is honored when His children wait upon Him, and Satan will not see them waiting without an endeavor to shake their faith. All attempts to hurry God's answer to our prayers will produce bad results. Even when we are most sure of having asked according to God's mind, we must leave the time unreservedly to Him. It may be hard to wait in patient expectation when all things seem to be going against us. When month after month, or week after week passes by and the answer has not come. But it is for us to wait at His footstool, and not try to hurry His arrangements.

INTENSITY IN PRAYER

We will now consider for a short time, intensity in Prayer. There are two distinct seasons of intense prayer:

- (1) Those with which circumstances have to do;
- (2) Those times in which we are being wrought upon by immediate and independent operations of the Spirit.

We are sometimes brought into circumstances that a fixed and speedy time must settle a question. God often teaches us the meaning of intensity in prayer by thus bringing us decidedly to a point. And we sometimes realize with how little intensity we have often prayed.

Another season of intensity in prayer is when sudden calamity comes upon us. We may suddenly find ourselves plunged into trouble, bereft of our resources, and of our friends, and at such a time we find ourselves brought into the immediate presence of God.

We feel that we must have more than human support, or we shall be unable to bear up under the sudden pressure that has come upon us. We are driven by our great distress to intensity in prayer. And it is thus that sudden calamity should be met, Nothing, brethren, will so calm our minds and fit us for deliberation as a few moments of intense prayer. We may rest assured God will be on our side, and we will be able to meet that with Him, which it would be impossible for us to meet without Him.

When we have special realization of the importance or magnitude of the things to be prayed for is another reason for intense prayer. We do not always realize how great are the blessings for which we are praying, and on this account our prayers are dull. But when we have been completely shut up to our own resources, and there is heavy pressure upon us, we often then learn the meaning of intensity in prayer. It may happen without our knowing or intending it, that we permit the possession of even one slender resource to affect our intensity in prayer. We honestly do not wish this to be the case. We wish to cast ourselves on God alone. We wish to look to Him alone, but poor, weak human nature makes us get our eye on some means which seems at hand, or from which we should hope much, if only we could get them within our reach.

Let us now think of some of the experiences of Intensity in Prayer due, it would seem, to the immediate operation of the Spirit.

Perhaps we have just failed in some point in which we had earnestly desired, and in which we had determined to do well, or it may be we are brooding over some past failure. Now it is as if the Spirit of the Lord were working upon us, showing us our weakness, proving us as to what we are in ourselves, even though we be honest and well intentioned, and active in making effort. Being pained and filled with self-reproach, and perhaps fear in reference to the future, we become quickened to intensity in prayer. We look to God, we seek Him as a refuge, we remember our standing in Christ, and perhaps in our intensity in prayer utter these words: "Unto Thee do I cry, O Lord, my Rock, be not silent unto me."

RESULTS SUCH AS REST, JOY, AND PEACE

The Results of continuance in prayer will be rest, joy, and peace as found in Him, in Christ our Redeemer.

We may be longing intently for inward comfort and peace. We want the peace of God, which passeth understanding. We know there is a state of rest for the soul, and that is what we crave. We may see much of its blessedness, though we feel we do not possess it. And this leads us to intensity in prayer. It is God's intention that this peace shall be given, but, dear brethren, we know it must be sought earnestly, not only through continuous prayer, but by all the means provided by the Lord.

"Learn of Me and ye shall find rest," saith our Lord. Rest is not a thing that can be given, but must be acquired. It comes not by an act, but by a process. In all spiritual things we know that God will not deny an answer, but how, and when, and through what instrumentality they are to be answered we must leave wholly in His hands.

Amen!!

*- BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION, 1930
Br. I.I. Margeson*

SOMEONE ONCE SAID

PRAYER

- Christians who are not praying are playing.
- A worldly Christian will stop praying; the praying Christian will stop worldliness.
- The purpose of prayer is not to change the Divine will, but to adjust oneself to it.
- Some people don't get down on their knees until they haven't a leg to stand on.
- He stands best who kneels most.

THE MARBLE DOESN'T MATTER ANY MORE

One day a lady was giving her little nephew some lessons. He was generally a good, attentive child, but on this occasion he could not fix his mind on his work. Suddenly he said, 'Auntie, may I kneel down and ask God to help me find my marble?' His Aunt having given her consent, the little boy knelt by his chair, closed his eyes, and prayed silently. Then he arose and went on with his lessons contentedly. Next day, almost afraid of asking the question, lest the child had not found his toy, and so might lose his simple faith, the lady said to him, 'Well, dear, have you found your marble?' 'No, Auntie,' was the reply; 'but God has made me not want to.'

God does not always answer our prayers in the way we wish or expect: but if we are sincere in our appeal to Him, He will take from us what is contrary to His will and give us faith to leave all in His holy will.

Transforming Truths

[Tamil Publications]

- 1. Christian Marriage**
- 2. Murmuring**
- 3. Feet Washing**
- 4. Pride**
- 5. Depression**
- 6. Faultfinding**
- 7. Prayer**

For Further Copies

Contact:

8428737474, 9442221874