
Effectual Prayer

*As Taught in the
Book of James*



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Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was 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. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:13-20).

EFFECTUAL PRAYER AS TAUGHT IN THE BOOK OF JAMES

James in his epistle gives us some useful and helpful suggestions concerning prayer.

Herein he deals with practical religion and reveals that the Christian life is both negative and positive especially emphasizing the positive elements of Christianity. The Christian life is a positive life. How absurd it is to think that one is a Christian by virtue of what one does not do instead of by virtue of what one does. A man may neglect the positive elements of the Christian life and lose his soul. Let me warn against the sin of omission. It is just as dangerous as positive and aggressive sin. One may lose his soul by sins of omission as well as by sins of commission. The Bible warns us again and again against *neglecting* the positive elements of the Christian life—against committing the sin of omission.

What was wrong with the fig tree that Christ cursed it? Was it loaded with poison? No, it simply had nothing but leaves. What was the charge against Dives? There was no charge at all. He *neglected* the positive elements of Christianity—he left man and God out of his life, and over his *neglected* duty he stumbled into a Christless eternity. What was wrong with the five foolish vir-

gins? It was not that they had water in their lamps. It was the simple fact that they had no vessels of oil with them and when the bridegroom came their lamps were going out. What was the matter with those to whom the judge said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Only this—they failed in doing their duty. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matt. 25:45).

God put Benhadad, a man whom He had appointed unto utter destruction, into the hands of King Ahab. Ahab let this man go and was sentenced to death. Not because he had committed an aggressive crime. He was not being punished for what he did. He was punished for what he failed to do—he had neglected a positive element. Ahab did not fail because of ignorance, or because of the lack of ability, or because he was not busy. "He was busy here and there." Likewise we may become so busy with the material things as to neglect our duties and privileges in Jesus Christ and fail to make it through to heaven. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a

doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:22-27).

The Book of James deals largely with the fundamentals of the Christian life, stressing prayer. James understood the art of prayer, hence we should listen when he speaks on this subject. It is said that after his death his knees were found to be calloused from much praying. The secret of the success of these early ministers was that they were men of intercession. In this brief epistle James gives us some very practical directions regarding prayer.

I. HE SPEAKS OF SEVERAL KINDS OF PRAYER

1. One kind of prayer mentioned by James is the unoffered prayer. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). The people in this class, in reality, are too lazy to ask. They take neither the time nor the strength to ask. "If any of you lack wisdom," (and surely that is the need of us all) "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Jesus fairly bids us to ask. Listen: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall

find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7, 8). "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). "Ye have not because ye ask not."

If the Lord would give us everything we desire without our asking Him for it, we would soon become too lazy to breathe, and that would be the end of us. If this class of people would only ask, the Lord has larger fields of activity, more money, better experiences, bigger prayers, sweeter songs, more victories, and unnumbered other blessings waiting for them.

2. Again there is the doubtful, wavering prayer. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James 1:6, 7). The doubtful, wavering prayer may be nicely worded and eloquently expressed but it brings no answer. They are man-made utterances without point, pith, or power. They aim at nothing, hit nothing, get nothing, do nothing. They are religious mouthings; even the devil ignores them.

3. Then there is the selfish prayer. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3), or pleasure. That which is asked may be good and within the range of promise, but the motive is selfish—one's own pleasure—hence it is not answered. Many a wife prays for the salvation of

her husband, not because she really desires his conversion and sanctification, but because she thinks if he were saved things would be easier for her personally. If we would see God answer prayer we must pray with the proper motive. A minister should pray for the interests of other preachers and their congregations, as well as his own, manifesting an unselfish spirit.

Rev. George Mueller saw the crying need of the poor orphans of his city and his heart was moved to aid them in a generous way. "Oh," he said, "that God would be the patron of a great institution." He saw rich English lords founding homes and establishments for the poor and getting the credit and a great name for it, and he said, "Would that God would do this for the orphans and Himself get a great name." The more the idea remained with him, the more it grew upon him. While praying about it, this thought seized him, "Suppose you succeed. It will give you a great name. George Mueller will be known the world over, and your name will become a household word wherever this institution is known. How about this? Is there no personal and sinful ambition in view? Is God, alone, in your thought?" Mr. Mueller said, "I lay on my face before God by the hour, asking Him to search my heart, and I received the evidence from God himself that my motive was a pure one—that I was acting for His glory and the interests of His kingdom alone." The Christian should do the will of God from the heart without the thought of self.

God, most certainly, wants to give revivals but oftentimes He cannot. When Charles J. Fowler

was a lay preacher, he was invited to a New England town to hold a series of meetings in a prominent church. He preached faithfully for a week or more under seemingly favorable circumstances, but with little results. One night at the close of the service he requested that all the members of the local church should remain awhile for consultation. This they did. Mr. Fowler then said, "God is certainly with me. He aids me in preaching, helps me in public prayer and in my private devotions. Our meetings are good as to attendance and attention, but no results in salvation. What is the matter? If it is with me I must find it out at once and get right, or go home." After a prolonged silence a young man, prominent in the life of the church, arose, and with great emotion said, "It may not be my place to speak, but I must. To me the situation is this: Our church has a commanding place in this town and has prospered in the years past. Of late we have not been holding our own with the other churches. Our congregations, while good, have dropped off some, as has our Sunday school; and our finances have not been up to the usual. I thought, in my heart if we have a revival it will call attention to our church, fill up our Sunday school, increase our congregation, and help our finances. I deplore all this, but I must state this as the confession of my soul as a man and as an officer in this church." He was hardly down when another said substantially the same thing, as did several others. There was a genuine spirit of confession and humiliation before God which was striking and searching. God was pleased. The Spirit came and

the revival was on in earnest—a multitude found God in the next few days. If the motive in prayer is wrong, then the reason why the prayer is not answered is at once explained.

4. There is also the effectual prayer, the prayer that brings the answer, the desired blessing, and effects the purpose. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5: 16b). There is nothing that so stirs our blood and spirit and quickens our whole being as a good, sweating petition, that shakes every atom of our being and later fills us with joy and covers us with glory. From such praying we rise in the strength of the Lord and undertake exploits for God—shout down a walled city, behead a few giants, or fall upon a thousand Philistines in the name of the Lord.

II. WHO MAY PRAY THE EFFECTUAL PRAYER?

Not every person may offer the effectual prayer. James says that the person who is doing the praying must pass one test. If he is to gain an audience with a Holy God and transact prayer business with Him, the standard to which he must conform is *righteousness*. James was writing to Christians to inspire them to a more effective prayer life. But even in the case of a sinner who comes to God pleading for pardon, the answer to his prayer is conditioned on his confessed willingness to forsake everything that is unrighteous, and to turn toward everything that God shows him to be righteous. A man to have an effective prayer life must have rectitude of character before God and man.

This seems like a strenuous demand, but stop to think of it, the one thing that God has placed within the reach of us all through His grace and through His Son is righteousness. A person without theological training can be righteous. One with no bank account can be righteous. One without an education can be righteous. When one comes to talk to God, the Creator of the world, no matter in what position of life he may be placed, he can be righteous. It is meaningless to pray in the morning and live like a barbarian the remainder of the day.

1. In what way does unrighteousness make one's prayers unavailing? Unrighteousness makes prayers unavailing by destroying their effect upon the unsaved. The world is ever alert to detect evil or inconsistencies in the life of a professed Christian. The man who knowingly does that which is wrong against God or against his fellowmen destroys the effect of his prayers. This manifests the tragic power and peril of influence. What can some Christians mean by the misuse and desperate waste of influence? The story is told of a little boy who slept with his father after his mother's death. The father was awakened one night by the pitiful sobs of his little six-year-old son. The father said, "Son, why do you cry?" And the little boy answered, "Daddy, it was just a dream, and I would rather not tell you about it—it was about you." Then the father patted and coaxed him, and insistently said, "Tell Papa about it." The little fellow haltingly replied, "Daddy, I dreamed that you, my own daddy, had your hands to my throat and were choking me to

death." This dream is a reality in the lives of many fathers and mothers. There are parents who by their unrighteous deeds are doing that to the souls of their children and neighbors. Oh, the grip of ungodly influence of professed Christians upon the lives of sinners with whom they associate! Brother, sister, your unrighteous acts will counteract the influence of your prayers upon the unsaved. Let us live righteous lives and face the stern realities as they ought to be faced, in order that we may not spoil, mar and debauch our influence. May God help us to live righteous lives—godly lives.

2. Unrighteousness also makes our prayers un-availing because it severs our spiritual touch with God. One day a boy was with his father in the field. Becoming thirsty the father said, "Son, go to the well and get me a drink." After taking the pail to the old-fashioned well and filling it, he returned to his father, who looked into the pail and exclaimed, "Why, son, there is no water in it!" Looking back across the field he saw the dotted line made by the water that had leaked out. So it may be with us. Unrighteousness or iniquity will be as holes in our spiritual vessels through which the blessing will leak out, will be a hindrance to keep our prayers from reaching the throne, and will rob our souls of God's power. David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66: 18). "Regard" means to pay respect to. "Iniquity" means the least deviation from the way of righteousness. David is then saying, "If I pay respect to the least

deviation from the path of righteousness in my heart the Lord will not hear me."

Isaiah stated the same thing, only in stronger language, when he said, "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. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Isaiah 59:1-3). Where these exist heaven seems to mock the efforts in prayer. The prayer life becomes paralyzed because iniquity is in the heart. There is a failure to measure up to the standard of righteousness. It is entirely possible that the reader may be guilty of these very things: "Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness." Perhaps you have spoken slanderous things. Anybody who talks a great deal has a tendency to transgress the truth. If the "great talker" does not tell a falsehood occasionally, he is an exception to the rule. There is no use trying to evade the fact, our prayers are ineffective. If we are going to commune with God, we must be sure that our relationship with God and others is that of a righteous man.

We may be able to pray, shout, preach and testify, yet if we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us. Sometimes God cannot afford to answer our prayers because we are hiding some forbidden wedge of gold or Babylonish garment in our lives. "And whatsoever we ask,

we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). It is "the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous man* [that] availeth much." Thank the Lord! The righteous man can pray until he feels God take hold of the other end of the prayer line. There comes a pull. He can tell he has hold of something though he cannot see it. Things begin to move. The answer is being tied on. Glory to God! And he prays on until he begins to cry, weep or shout, because he has the assurance that it will come to pass on the earth. ✓

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTUAL PRAYER

We have discovered who may pray the effectual prayer that availeth much, so let us now notice some of the characteristics of this prayer. Not all saved and sanctified people know all about the characteristics of effectual prayer. I know but little about it, but thank God for that little. The fervent effectual prayer is very remarkable: remarkable in its nature, in its results and in its scarcity.

1. The first characteristic of effectual prayer is fervency, which suggests warmth. The fervent prayer is the welling up of the desires from the heart aglow with divine love; it burns and flames with zeal and fervor; it glows with inner light and burns with inner fire; it is an expression of an inner experience often pouring like molten lava from interior depths—red-hot and spacious. Sometimes such prayers may be a little loud. It may be difficult to put them in

old prayer forms. The very prayers of some holy people put others under conviction. James says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly [prayed in his prayer] 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 Holy Spirit breathed in the prayer and inspired the faith to believe that God would break the drought: the Holy Ghost was praying through him, and that constitutes the effectual fervent prayer that availeth much. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18a). "For we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26, R. V.). The truly effectual prayer is inbreathed by the Holy Spirit, and the outbreathed in the fervency and earnestness of the human spirit.

The men of the Bible who prayed acceptably were earnest men. The eighteenth chapter of Genesis presents Abraham as an example of intercessory prayer. Here we see the depth of his concern for Lot and his family who were living in the doomed city of Sodom and hear the cries coming from the burning heart of Abraham as he, "drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23). Listen to Jacob at the brook Jabbok, as he pleads, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26a). It is not at all surprising that a little later Jacob is told, "Thy name shall be

called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). Moses was a great pray-er because he prayed fervently. He was indeed a very Hercules in prayer. Listen to Moses, the brave leader of Israel, as he prayed for a vacillating people that had been guilty of the mad worship of the golden calf: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet, now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:31, 32a). Oh, how intensely earnest was Moses, as thus he prayed. Listen for a moment to Paul's heart cry for the people around him, who were not right with God: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3). When a man is filled with such holy fervor, is it any wonder that he scales the heavenlies when he prays?

In the history of the Church there are many examples of men and women who have prayed effectually. It was George Whitefield, the agony of whose soul was expressed in the cry, "Lord, give me souls or take my soul." There was John Knox, who was noted for his remarkable power in prayer. His heart was deeply stirred by the spiritual desolation of his people. It is said that he would spend hours on his knees or fall prostrate upon his face in prayer for the salvation

of his people. And in seasons of deep soul agony he would cry out, "Oh, God, give me Scotland, or I die." Is it any wonder that hapless Queen Mary said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than I fear an army of ten thousand men"? It is said that Xavier, the great missionary evangelist, once prayed with such earnestness that it seemed as if he would do violence to heaven. Fletcher stained the walls with the breath of his ardent supplications and Payson wore the hardwood boards into grooves where his knees pressed so often and so long. This does not necessarily imply great physical energy or loudness, but that these persons were deeply in earnest when they came to the throne of grace to make known their requests unto God. We should remember that physical intensity and strain does not necessarily indicate that we are praying. There is a possibility of substituting physical earnestness for the fervency of the Holy Spirit that should be present when we pray.

Evangelist Hyman Appleman tells the story of John and Mary Welsh, the daughter and son-in-law of John Knox. "John was a sickly, anemic, consumptive, Nonconformist preacher in the time of James of Scotland, when the Catholic Church ruled the land. John had been imprisoned for preaching the gospel. The filth, the darkness, the dampness of his cell, robbed him of what little health he had, so that he almost died. Time and again Mary appealed to the king for his release, only to be refused. One day, in her desperation, she threw herself on her knees in front of the king as he was riding through the palace park.

The king reined in his horse and asked her what she wanted. Once more she told him the pathetic plight of her husband and begged for his discharge from prison. After studying a moment, the king made her an offer. 'Woman,' he said, 'if you will promise that your husband will never preach again, I will open the doors of his cell at once.' Mary arose to her feet. Lifting her apron, she threw back her head and looked fully and fearlessly into James' face. 'Your Majesty,' she cried, 'I had rather have the head of my husband in this apron than to make any such promise.' Moved by the intensity of the woman, the king released John into her custody. She took him back to their home in the Scottish highlands and carefully, gently, lovingly nursed him back to health. He began to preach once more, keeping one jump ahead of the police and the dragoons. One night the two found themselves hidden in a small highland cottage. It was freezingly cold. They had gone to bed early. In the middle of the night, Mary awoke to find her husband's side of the bed empty and cold. She heard a motion on the floor and looked down. There was John stretched out on that frozen earth floor, wrapped in a spread, weeping and groaning in prayer. She urged him to return to bed for fear of catching a bad cold. He said something to her which she took as a sign of assent and fell asleep once more. The morning sun woke her up. John was still on the floor, deep in agonizing prayer. She bent down and touched his shoulder, urging him to get under the covers to warm up. He lifted his twisted, tear-stained face to her and said, 'O woman, let

me alone. I have three thousand souls on my heart this night, and I know not how it is with many of them.'” That is effectual, fervent praying—the burning, yearning, driving, longing, constraining desire poured out to God for the souls of men.

2. In the second place, the effectual prayer is a definite prayer, that is, it has directness of aim. It will shoot at something, hit the target, and ring the bell. You may know it hit center shot. Elijah prayed for a drought and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again for rain and the heavens gave rain. There is general praying, and there is definite praying. Effectual praying is definite asking. All effectual prayers recorded in the Bible were of this kind. Let us recall Elijah’s prayer on Mount Carmel. It is very short but right to the point. Elijah prayed, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again” (1 Kings 18:36, 37). Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice. The leper that came to Christ did not spend any time in idle formalities but cried out, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Luke 5:12a). The publican smote upon his breast and cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13a). The thief on the cross expressed the deep yearning in his soul, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42a). Blind Bartimeus sat by the highway side begging,

and when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, "He began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47a). We remember that Christ, our great example and teacher, prayed with the simplicity of a child, yet how profoundly. With His heart full of tender pity, He would come to the throne-room of the Father and express definitely the desires of His soul. Never once did the Father disappoint Him.

Rev. George Mueller, crossing from England to Quebec, Canada, was on the boat as it ran into a heavy fog. It was barely able to creep along, and Mr. Mueller saw that if the fog continued the ship could not dock in time to enable him to keep an important appointment. He went to the captain who was, of course, on the bridge and said to him, "Do you think that we will land on time?" The captain replied, "I am sure I can't tell you. If this keeps up I know we will not." "Well," said Mr. Mueller, "I have an engagement in Quebec, and I must be there." The captain replied, "I can't help you, sir, I can't control this fog." The man of God replied, "But I know somebody who can, captain." He continued, "For fifty-seven years I have been making engagements in the will of God and keeping them. I have not broken one of them in fifty-seven years, and I don't believe that God wants me to break this one. He can lift the fog. I propose that we pray." The captain got down. Even though he did not take any stock in prayer, he was reverent. He told afterward how simple, trustful and definite the prayer was. When Mr. Mueller said, "Amen,"

the captain thought that he would say a prayer. He had no sooner started, however, when Mr. Mueller interrupted, "Oh, no, captain, you don't need to pray, for in the first place you don't believe that God will answer, and in the second place, I believe that He has answered. Let us look up." They arose from their knees and to the utter amazement of the captain there was a place where the fog had parted as though drawn back by an unseen hand and the sunlight was streaming through. Under a full head of steam the ship proceeded to Quebec and arrived in time for George Mueller to keep his engagement. Glory to God! Wherever it is found that the blessing sought is obtained, it will be found also that the prayer offered for it was a definite prayer. We need definite prayers. Let us search out our heart's need and concerns and present them definitely and fervently before the throne of divine grace.

3. Again, to pray effectually means that we do all within our power to effect that for which we pray. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. . . . faith without works is dead" (James 2:18, 20a). If we want a revival we must get to the place where we will do all in our power to bring it about. The Lord will then answer, and things will begin to move for God. If we will pay the price, we can have a revival in the church. It is useless to pray for a revival unless we do all within our power to bring it about. A noted Christian worker once made the statement, "Be-

fore I engage in any undertaking I pray as though it all depends on God and then work as if it all depends on me." That is the condition necessary for effectual prayer.

4. Once more, the effectual prayer is the prayer of faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In instructing the brethren how to pray James said, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James 1:6, 7). Faith is that which will carry your message through, and will catch the ear of the heavenly Father. It will command the resources of heaven. Faith laughs at impossibilities and cries, "It shall be done!"

James says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." The original suggests, "Let them brood over him in prayer," the thought being to seek the mind of the Spirit. "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." However, if we read the New Testament we will realize that the healing of the body is secondary in our Christian program for this dispensation. It is too bad divine healing has been commercialized. The major emphasis is placed on the salvation of souls.

In a southern city Dr. George W. Truett preached one morning on the subject of "Faith." At the close of his sermon an elderly woman arose and asked, "Preacher, do you believe what you

have preached today?" He replied, "Indeed I do, for I have proclaimed God's Word, which Word I surely believe." "Very well," she said, "I am so glad that you believe it. I am looking for someone who believes it. You quoted in your sermon, just now, that glorious promise from Jesus, 'If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven . . .'. Do you believe that promise, and will you plead it with me for my husband who is getting old? He never goes to church and is a very wicked man." As Dr. Truett stood there silently, examining his heart and wondering if he really believed that promise, a plainly dressed blacksmith arose and said, "Auntie, I will join you in pleading that promise," and there before the entire congregation he walked over to her and humbly said, "Let us plead it now." They knelt and he prayed as simply as a child talking to its mother. The sincerity and the pathos of it were indescribable. At the evening service the elderly lady came in bringing her husband, a white-haired old man. During the service the aged wife and middle-aged blacksmith sat with their faces shining like diamonds. Since they had pleaded and claimed the promise of Jesus their hearts knew that all was well. When the invitation was given for people to come to Christ, the old man came immediately to the front for counsel and prayer. However, the night service ended and the old man shambled out into the darkness with his soul darker than ever. But the next morning, in Dr. Truett's study, the old man was wonderfully saved

and at the morning service he gave a testimony for Christ, the brightness and glory of which will outlast the stars. Oh, let us actually believe His promises and honestly plead them in behalf of the unsaved. Faith is the key that unlocks heaven and moves the arm of God.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE EFFECTUAL PRAYER

Now let us notice the results of the effectual prayer. "It availeth much." We find Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

1. Prayer is a great blessing to the individual soul. Prayer is the most powerful energy that one can generate. The influence of prayer on the human being can be measured in terms of increased spiritual apprehension, greater physical buoyancy, intellectual vigor, moral stamina, and a deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationships. Only in prayer do we achieve that complete and harmonious unity of body, mind, and spirit which gives the frail human reed its unshakable strength. The command and promise, "Ask and it shall be given to you," have been verified by the experience of humanity. It is true that prayer may not restore the dead child or bring relief from physical pain, but prayer, like radium, is a source of luminous, self-generating power. It is the only power in the world that seems to go beyond the so-called "laws of nature." The occasions on which prayer has dramatically done this have been termed "miracles." There is a quieter miracle taking place hourly in the hearts of men and women who have

discovered that prayer supplies them with a steady flow of sustaining power in their daily lives.

Prayer brings us into consciousness of God—contact with God. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible power of God and ask that a part of this power be apportioned to our needs. Whenever we pray fervently we change both soul and body for the better. It could not happen that any man or woman prays for a single moment without some good results. "No man ever prayed," said Emerson, "without learning something."

One can pray anywhere, in the streets, the subway, the office, the shop, the school, as well as in the solitude of one's own room or among the worshipers in a church. There is no prescribed time or place for posture. Epictetus said, "Think of God more often than you breathe." In order to really mold personality, prayer must become a habit. True prayer is a way of life; the truest life is literally a way of prayer.

Today, as never before, prayer is a definite necessity in the lives of men and nations. The lack of emphasis on the religious senses has brought the world to the edge of destruction. Our deepest source of power has been left tragically undeveloped. Prayer, the basic exercise of the spirit, must be actively practiced in our private lives. The neglected soul of man must be made strong enough to assert itself once more. If the power of prayer is again released and used in the lives of the common men and women, there is yet

hope that prayer will greatly alter the moral complexion of the world.

2. The fervent prayer will result in a great blessing to the church. Prayer is the oil that lubricates the machinery and causes all to run smoothly. There will be no hot boxes, breaking of belts, slipping of cogs or leaking of steam. Prayer will do more to remove misunderstandings and divisions than all the delegations ever assembled. Prayer will do more to bring about a revival than all the machinery man can set up. Every revival has its origin in fervent prayer. The first great revival at Pentecost was the result of a ten-day prayer meeting. D. L. Moody went to England to take a vacation. It was not his intention to preach. However, he was persuaded to speak during the morning and evening services of a church in London. The church was crowded for the morning service, but Mr. Moody had no liberty. He even regretted that he had promised to speak in the evening service. That evening the church was crowded to the doors. During the first part of the service, the people sat as if they had been carved out of stone. Mr. Moody sensed the frigid atmosphere. When he was about half way through his message, the power of the Holy Ghost fell upon the audience. At the close of the message, he invited the unsaved to come to Christ, and the people arose in groups. Thinking they had misunderstood his proposition, he made it clearer than before, and asked all who wanted to accept Christ to pass into the adjoining room. They crowded in until the room was packed. A service was announced for the following eve-

ning, and during the next ten days four hundred people were brought to Christ and added to the churches in that part of London.

The secret of that marvelous awakening was an invalid lady in the city who had been praying for months that God would send D. L. Moody to preach in her church. And upon learning that he had preached in the morning service and was to preach again in the evening service, she said to her sister, "I have been praying for some time that God would send Mr. Moody to preach in our church. Now, sister, go out of the room, close the door, and send me no dinner; and no matter who comes—don't let them see me. I am going to spend the whole afternoon and evening in prayer." And while Mr. Moody was preaching in the evening service, that bedridden saint was holding him up in prayer. God, who delights to answer prayer, poured out His Spirit and hundreds of souls were saved. Earth has never yet seen how much may be accomplished by fervent prayer. Prayer by the hour, daily prayer, a continuous spirit of prayer, much secret prayer will link us with God, break down difficulties, open closed doors, release energies for the spread of the kingdom of Christ, bring victory in the hour of crisis, and make the Christian life a glorious triumph.

3. Once more, fervent prayer availeth much in the salvation of the unsaved. It availed much when the great English preacher and song writer, John Newton, was an exceedingly wayward youth. He ran away from his widowed mother and made his way to Africa where he gave him-

self up to every manner of unbridled sin. But his mother never ceased to pray for him. She often expressed her faith that he would be saved and become a minister. Her nightly prayer was always for her wayward son; her early morning prayer was a deep welling up in her soul and cry to heaven for her son to come back to God. One day she was found dead, kneeling by her bedside in an attitude of prayer with the coverlets wet with her tears. There is no question that she pleaded with dying breath for the salvation of her erring boy. At that time, John, in the heart of Africa, was seized with fearful conviction. Driven by his frenzy, he returned to the seacoast and boarded a ship for England. While he was at sea a terrible storm arose. The lightning flashed and the thunders bellowed until the entire crew expected the immediate destruction of the ship. The bold, bad heart of John Newton melted like wax before a fire. He began to cry mightily to God, who gloriously converted him. Upon hearing of his mother's prayers for him, he became one of the most devoted spiritual preachers that ever graced the pulpits of England. Truly he sang from his heart:

“Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.”

An experience of Charles G. Finney further points out the results of fervent prayer. Although he was undoubtedly preaching great sermons, things were at a standstill in this particular re-

vival. Since the weather was warm, he found a barn where he fasted and prayed all night and the following day. When he delivered his message the next evening, the people fell under the power of the Holy Spirit. He had paid the price in intercessory prayer, and it had availed much.

I wish I could stir every atom of your being until you will resolve in your heart of hearts to pray "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much." If Christ cursed the fig tree that had nothing but leaves, what will He do with us for living a prayerless life that bears no fruit unto eternal life? If the five foolish virgins were shut out of the bridegroom's chamber simply because they had no oil in their lamps, what will Christ do with us for living a prayerless life, a life that does not point broken-hearted sinners to Calvary? If Dives stumbled over his neglected opportunity into a Christless eternity, what can we expect if we carry no burden of prayer for the lost, except to fall into the place of outer darkness where our neglected opportunities will torment us throughout eternity? I beg you in Jesus' name to stir yourselves until you will have a more vital prayer life. It is our inescapable duty to pray. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1a). The supreme need of the world, in this troubled hour, is a great, deep, wide-reaching, heaven-sent, spiritual visitation. Let us dedicate ourselves to unceasing prayer for it. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."



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- **Begin each day with God**
- **Never see anyone's face until you have first seen God's face**
- **Never talk to anyone until you have first talked with God**
- **Never read anyone's book until you have first read God's Book**