



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Prayer

Lord, please forgive me for being so soft and wimpy about my faith and my commitment to Your call on my life. Please help me to become tough in the Spirit so I can deal with any attack the devil might try to bring against my life. I am so sorry that I've bent under pressure, whining and complaining that things were too hard, despite the fact that the power of Your resurrection lives inside me. I don't want to waste one more minute feeling sorry for myself. Therefore, I ask You to help me brace myself, grab hold of Your power, and bravely overcome every situation in the power of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

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If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 NOW SAMUEL died, and all the Israelites assembled and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. David arose and went to the Wilderness of Paran. 2 A very rich man was in Maon, whose possessions and business were in Carmel. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 The man's name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail; she was a woman of good understanding, and beautiful. But the man was rough and evil in his doings; he was a Calebite. 4 David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. 5 And David sent out ten young men and said to [them], Go up to Carmel to Nabal and greet him in my name; 6 And salute him thus: Peace be to you and to your house and to all that you have. 7 I have heard that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight, for we come at an opportune time. I pray you, give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David. 9 And when David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then paused. 10 And Nabal answered David's servants and said, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who are each breaking away from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they belong? 12 So David's young men turned away, and came and told him all that was said. 13 And David said to his men, Every man gird on his sword. And they did so, and David also girded on his sword; and there went up after David about 400 men, and 200 remained with the baggage. 14 But one of Nabal's young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he railed at them. 15 But David's men were very good to us, and we were not harmed, nor did we miss anything as long as we went with them, when we were in the fields. 16 They were a wall to us night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. 17 So know this and consider what you will do, for evil is determined against our master and all his house. For he is such a wicked man that one cannot speak to him. 18 Then Abigail made haste and took 200 loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five measures of parched grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. 19 And she said to her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 As she rode on her donkey, she came down hidden by the mountain, and behold, David and his men came down opposite her, and she met them. 21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has repaid me evil for good. 22 May God do so, and more also, to David if I leave of all who belong to him one male alive by morning. 23 When Abigail saw David, she hastened and lighted off the donkey, and fell before David on her face and did obeisance. 24 Kneeling at his feet she said, Upon me alone let this guilt be, my lord. And let your handmaid, I pray you, speak in your presence, and hear the words of your handmaid. 25 Let not my lord, I pray you, regard this foolish and wicked fellow Nabal, for as his name is, so is he—Nabal [foolish, wicked] is his name, and folly is with him. But I, your handmaid, did not see my lord's young men whom you sent. 26 So now, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, seeing that the Lord has prevented you from bloodguiltiness and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now this gift, which your handmaid has brought my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Forgive, I pray you, the trespass of your handmaid, for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the Lord's battles, and evil has not been found in you all your days. 29 Though man is risen up to pursue you and to seek your life, yet the life of my lord shall be bound in the living bundle with the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies—they shall He sling out as out of the center of a sling. 30 And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that He has promised concerning you and has made you ruler over Israel, 31 This shall be no staggering grief to you or cause for pangs of conscience to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause or that my lord has avenged himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then [earnestly] remember your handmaid. 32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, Who sent you this day to meet me. 33 And blessed be your discretion and advice, and blessed be you who have kept me today from bloodguiltiness and from avenging myself with my own hand. 34 For as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, Who has prevented me from hurting you, if you had not hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning there would not have been left so much as one male to Nabal. 35 So David accepted what she had brought him and said to her, Go up in peace to your house. See, I have hearkened to your voice and have granted your petition. 36 And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house like the feast of a king. And [his] heart was merry, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light. 37 But in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife told him these things, his heart died within him and he became [paralyzed, helpless as] a stone. 38 And about ten days after that, the Lord smote Nabal and he died. 39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the Lord, Who has pleaded the cause of my reproach at the hand of Nabal, and kept His servant from evil. For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him as his wife. 40 And when the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, David sent us to you to take you to him to be his wife. 41 And she arose and bowed herself to the earth and said, Behold, let your handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. 42 And Abigail hastened and arose and rode on a donkey, with five of her maids who followed her, and she went after the messengers of David and became his wife. 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives. 44 Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

Chapter 25

Now Samuel died; and all of the Israelites were gathered together, and lamenting him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran. And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very wealthy, he had three thousand sheep, a thousand goats: and they were shearing his sheep there in Carmel (1Sa 25:1-2).

Now Carmel is the mountain range that goes from east to west. It starts at the port city of Haifa and goes east along the area. Actually, Megiddo is in a portion, a lower portion of this range of Carmel, just about the end of the range towards the east. So there Nabal, his servants were shearing his sheep.

Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife was Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and a very beautiful face: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. And so David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: And thus shall you say to him who is living in such prosperity, Peace both to thee, and peace to your house, and peace to all that you have. Now I've heard that you have shearers: and now your shepherds which were with us, we did not hurt them, neither was there anything missing from them, all the while that they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let my young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to your hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all of the words in the name of David, and they had finished. Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there are many servants now a days that break away from a man's master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men, whom I know not from where they are? So David's young men turned their way, and they went again, and they came and told David all those sayings. And David said to his men, All right men put on your swords. So every man put on his sword; and David also put on his sword: and they went up after David about four hundred men; two hundred men stayed by their stuff. And one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good to us, we were not hurt, neither did we miss anything, as long as we were conversant with them, in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, the whole while we were there keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what you're gonna do; for evil is determined against our master, and against his house: for he is such a man of Belial, that a man can't speak to him (1Sa 25:3-17).

So they came to Nabal's wife, and they said, "Hey, David sent these servants to talk to our master, and man, he really railed on them. It's not good, because David's men were indeed kind. They were a wall to us, they didn't take anything from us, and now evil's determined. We can't talk to him, you know, no one can talk to him. He's just such a character."

And so Abigail, Nabal's wife made haste, she took two hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five sheep that were already dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred little cakes of dried figs, and she laid them on the donkeys. And she said to her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she did not tell her husband Nabal. And it was so, as she rode on the donkey, that as she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men were coming down against her; and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed from all that pertained to him: and he has requited me evil for good. And so more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any man at all. And when Abigail saw David, she hurried, and got off of her donkey, and fell down before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground. And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let your handmaid, I pray thee, speak in your audience, and hear the words. Don't let my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he (1Sa 25:18-25);

Now the word "Nabal" means foolish. She said, "Don't regard this guy. He's a fool like his name, so he is, his name is a fool. So you know he's just, he is. They named him well."

[Fool] is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom you did send. ["I didn't see them."] Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, seeing the Lord has withheld thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with your own hand, now let your enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which your handmaid has brought unto my lord, let it be given unto the young men hath follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil has not been found in thee in all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling (1Sa 25: 25-29).

So Abigail is there pleading with David. Beautiful woman, has brought all of these things, and she is making good sense. "You know why should you avenge yourself. God will avenge you David. He's taken care of you, and so forgive the foolishness of this foolish man."

It shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee the ruler over Israel; Then this will not be a grief to you, ["that you avenge yourself, this won't be on your conscience that you came up and you wiped out this guy and his family just because he didn't give the provisions that you were wanting for your men."] but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember your handmaid. So David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you to meet me today: And blessed is the advice, and blessed are you, which have kept me today from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand (1Sa 25:30-33).

Now to me this shows the greatness of David. Some men are so dumb that they can't take advice from women. You know they think, "I'm the man" and they're not willing to listen to anybody much, and really oftentimes not a woman. But here it really shows the greatness of David. "Ah, blessed be thou of the Lord," that's good advice, blessed is your advice. You're just a blessed person. "Thank you for coming and stopping me from avenging myself, shedding blood, avenging myself." He saw that the advice was sound. He saw that it was good. He respected it, he admired her for it, and of course, many characteristics about Abigail, very, very sharp, good woman. She'll be an interesting one to meet in heaven and to share with and all. She's just a very outstanding person indeed.

For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, which has kept me back from hurting thee, except you had come to meet me, surely there had not been to Nabal any left in the family. So David received of her hand that which she had received of him, and said to her, Go up in peace to your house; I have hearkened to your voice, I've accepted what you've said. So Abigail came to Nabal;

and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk: therefore she did not tell him any thing less, or more, until the morning. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, [Sobering up] that his wife told him of these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone (1Sa 25:34-37).

He was so angry and so upset in what she did, he just froze. His heart died within him, and actually he probably had a heart attack.

And it came to pass ten days afterwards, [that he died,] the Lord smote Nabal, and he died. And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and commended with Abigail, that she might become his wife. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us to thee, to take thee to him for a wife. And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. [Now here again showing really the greatness of this woman Abigail, she said, "Oh let me wash your feet, the feet of the servants of my lord", so they were servants but yet a very gracious woman, and a marvelous woman indeed.] So Abigail hurried, and arose, and rode upon a donkey, with five of her damsels that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. Now David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son the Laish, which was of Gallim (1Sa 25:38-43).

So the whole crazy mixed-up marriage situations that began, which of course with Solomon when he took over as king, took to the extremes, foolish extremes. (Through The Bible; C2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Commentaries; 1979 – 1986)

III. THE NECESSITY FOR PRAYING MEN

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."—Ephes. 6:18.

"Without praying for us also that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in bonds: that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak."—Col. 4:3.

One of the crying things of our day is for men whose faith, prayers and study of the Word of God have been vitalized, and a transcript of that Word is written on their hearts, and who will give it forth as the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth forever. Nothing more is needed to clear up the haze by which a critical unfaith has eclipsed the Word of God than the fidelity of the pulpit in its unwavering allegiance to the Bible and the fearless proclamation of its truth. Without this the standard-bearer fails, and wavering and confusion all along the ranks follow. The pulpit has wrought its mightiest work in the days of its unswerving loyalty to the Word of God.

In close connection with this, must we have men of prayer, men in high and low places who hold to and practice Scriptural praying. While the pulpit must hold to its unswerving loyalty to the Word of God, it must, at the same time, be loyal to the doctrine of prayer which that same Word illustrates and enforces upon mankind.

Schools, colleges and education considered simply as such cannot be regarded as being leaders in carrying forward the work of God's kingdom in the world. They have neither the right, the will nor the power to do the work. This is to be accomplished by the preached Word, delivered in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, sown with prayerful hands, and watered with the tears of praying hearts. This is the divine law, and so "nominated in the bond." We are shut up and sealed to it—we would follow the Lord.

Men are demanded for the great work of soul saving, and men must go. It is no angelic or impersonal force which is needed. Human hearts baptized with the spirit of prayer, must bear the burden of this message, and human tongues on fire as the result of earnest, persistent prayer, must declare the Word of God to dying men.

The Church, today, needs praying men to execute her solemn and pressing responsibility to meet the fearful crisis which is facing her. The crying need of the times is for men, in increased numbers—God-fearing men, praying men, Holy Ghost men, men who can endure hardness, who will count not their lives dear unto themselves, but count all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. The men who are so greatly needed in this age of the Church are those who have learned the business of praying,—learned it upon their knees, learned it in the need and agony of their own hearts.

Praying men are the one commanding need of this day, as of all other days, in which God is to have or make a showing. Men who pray are, in reality, the only religious men, and it takes a full-measured man to pray. Men of prayer are the only men who do or can represent God in this world. No cold, irreligious, prayerless man can claim the right. They misrepresent God in all His work, and all His plans. Praying men are the only men who have influence with God, the only kind of men to whom God commits Himself and His Gospel. Praying men are the only men in which the Holy Spirit dwells, for the Holy Spirit and prayer go hand-in-hand. The Holy Spirit never descends upon prayerless men. He never fills them, He never empowers them. There is nothing whatever in common between the Spirit of God and men who do not pray. The Spirit dwells only in a prayer atmosphere.

In doing God's work there is no substitute for praying. The men of prayer cannot be displaced with other kinds of men. Men of financial skill, men of education; men of worldly influence—none of these can possibly be put in substitution for the men of prayer. The life, the vigour, the motive-power of God's work is formed by praying men. A vitally diseased heart is not a more fearful symptom of approaching death than non-praying men are of spiritual atrophy.

The men to whom Jesus Christ committed the fortunes and destiny of His Church were men of prayer. To no other kind of men has God ever committed Himself in this world. The Apostles were preeminently men of prayer. They gave themselves to prayer. They made praying their chief business. It was first in point of importance and first in results. God never has, and He never will, commit the weighty interests of His kingdom to prayerless men, who do not make prayer a conspicuous and controlling factor in their lives. Men never rise to any eminence of piety who do not pray. Men of piety are always men of prayer. Men are never noted for the simplicity and strength of their faith who are not preeminently men of prayer. Piety flourishes nowhere so rapidly and so rankly as in the closet. The closet is the garden of faith.

The Apostles allowed no duty, however sacred, to so engage them as to infringe upon their time and prevent them from making prayer the main thing. The Word of God was ministered by apostolic fidelity and zeal. It was spoken by men with apostolic commissions and whose heads the fiery tongues of Pentecost had baptized. The Word was pointless and powerless without they were freshly endued with power by continuous and mighty prayer. The seed of God's Word must be saturated in prayer to make it germinate. It grows readier and roots deeper when it is prayer-soaked.

The Apostles were praying men, themselves. They were teachers of prayer, and trained their disciples in the school of prayer. They urged prayer upon their disciples not only that they might attain to the loftiest eminence of faith, but that they might be the most powerful factors in advancing God's kingdom.

Jesus Christ was the divinely appointed leader of God's people, and no one thing in His life proves His eminent fitness for that office so fully as His habit of prayer. Nothing is more suggestive of thought than Christ's continual praying, and nothing is more conspicuous about Him than prayer. His campaigns were arranged, His victories gained, in the struggles and communion of His all-night praying. His praying rent the heavens. Moses and Elijah and the Transfiguration glory waited on His praying. His miracles and His teaching had their force from the same source. Gethsemane's praying crimsoned Calvary with serenity and glory. His prayer makes the history and hastens the triumphs of His Church. What an inspiration and command to prayer is Christ's life! What a comment on its worth! How He shames our lives by His praying!

Like all His followers who have drawn God nearer to the world and lifted the world nearer to God, Jesus was the man of prayer, made of God a leader and commander to His people. His leadership was one of prayer. A great leader He was, because He was great in prayer. All great leaders for God have fashioned their leadership in the wrestlings of their closets. Many great men have led and moulded the Church who have not been great in prayer, but they were great only in their plans, great for their opinions, great for their organization, great by natural gifts, by the force of genius or of character. However, they were not great for God. But Jesus Christ was a great leader for God. His was the great leadership of great praying. God was in His leadership greatly because prayer was in it greatly. We might just well express the wish that we be taught by Him to pray, and to pray more and more.

Herein has been the secret of the men of prayer in the past history of the Church. Their hearts were after God, their desires were on Him, their prayers were addressed to Him. They communed with Him, sought nothing of the world, sought great things of God, wrestled with Him, conquered all opposing forces, and opened up the channel of faith deep and broad between them and heaven. And all this was done by the use of prayer. Holy meditations, spiritual desires, heavenly drawings, swayed their intellects, enriched their emotions, and filled and enlarged their hearts. And all this was so because they were first of all men of prayer.

The men who have thus communed with God and who have sought after Him with their whole hearts, have always risen to consecrated eminence, and no man has ever risen to this eminence whose flames of holy desire have not all been dead to the world and all aglow for God and heaven. Nor have they ever risen to the heights of the higher spiritual experiences unless prayer and the spirit of prayer have been conspicuous and controlling factors in their lives.

The entire consecration of many of God's children stands out distinctly like towering mountain-peaks. Why is this? How did they ascend to these heights? What brought them so near to God? What made them so Christ-like? The answer is easy-prayer. They prayed much, prayed long, and drank deeper and deeper still. They asked, they sought, and they knocked, till heaven opened its richest inner treasures of grace to them. Prayer was the Jacob's Ladder by which they scaled those holy and blessed heights, and the way by which the angels of God came down to and ministered to them.

The men of spiritual mould and might always value prayer. They took time to be alone with God. Their praying was no hurried performance. They had many serious wants to be relieved, and many weighty pleas they had to offer. Many large supplies they must secure. They had to do much silent waiting before God, and much patient iteration and reiteration to utter to Him. Prayer was the only channel through which supplies came, and was the only way to utter pleas. The only acceptable waiting before God of which they knew anything was prayer. They valued praying. It was more precious to them than all jewels, more excellent than any good, more to be valued than the greatest good of earth. They esteemed it, valued it, prized it, and did it. They pressed it to its farthest limits, tested its greatest results, and secured its most glorious patrimony. To them prayer was the one great thing to be appreciated and used.

The Apostles above everything else were praying men, and left the impress of their prayer example and teaching upon the early Church. But the Apostles are dead, and times and men have changed. They have no successors by official entail or heirship. And the times have no commission to make other apostles. Prayer is the entail to spiritual and apostolical leadership. Unfortunately the times are not prayerful times. God's cause just now needs very greatly praying leaders. Other things may be needed, but above all else this is the crying demand of these times and the urgent first need of the Church.

This is the day of great wealth in the Church and of wonderful material resources. But unfortunately the affluence of material resources is a great enemy and a severe hindrance to strong spiritual forces. It is an invariable law that the presence of attractive and potent

material forces creates a trust in them, and by the same inevitable law, creates distrust in the spiritual forces of the Gospel. They are two masters which cannot be served at one and the same time. For just in proportion as the mind is fixed on one, will it be drawn away from the other. The days of great financial prosperity in the Church have not been days of great religious prosperity. Moneyed men and praying men are not synonymous terms.

Paul in 1 Tim. 2, emphasizes the need of men to pray. Church leaders in his estimation are to be conspicuous for their praying. Prayer ought and must of necessity shape their characters, and must be one of their distinguishing characteristics. Prayer ought to be one of their most powerful elements, so much so that it cannot be hid. Prayer ought to make Church leaders notable. Character, official duty, reputation and life, all should be shaped by prayer. The mighty forces of prayer lie in its praying leaders in a marked way. The standing obligation to pray rests in a peculiar sense on Church leaders. Wise will the Church be to discover this prime truth and give prominence to it.

It may be laid down as an axiom, that God needs, first of all, leaders in the Church who will be first in prayer, men with whom prayer is habitual and characteristic, men who know the primacy of prayer. But even more than a habit of prayer, and more than prayer being characteristic of them, Church leaders are to be impregnated with prayer—men whose lives are made and moulded by prayer, whose heart and life are made up of prayer. These are the men—the only men—God can use in the furtherance of His kingdom and the implanting of His message in the hearts of men.

IV. GOD'S NEED OF MEN WHO PRAY

"We do what He commands. We go where He wants us to go. We speak what He wants us to speak. His will is our law. His pleasure our joy. He is, today, seeking the lost and He would have us seek with Him. He is shepherding the lambs and He wants our cooperation. He is opening doors in heathen lands, and He wants our money and our prayers."—Anon.

We proceed now to declare that it demands prayer-leadership to hold the Church to God's aims, and to fit it for God's uses. Prayer-leadership preserves the spirituality of the Church, just as prayerless leaders make for unspiritual conditions. The Church is not spiritual simply by the mere fact of its existence, nor by its vocation. It is not held to its sacred vocation by generation, nor by succession. Like the new birth, "It is not of blood, neither of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The Church is not spiritual simply because it is concerned and deals in spiritual values. It may hold its confirmations by the thousand, it may multiply its baptisms, and administer its sacraments innumerable times, and yet be as far from fulfilling its true mission as human conditions can make it.

This present world's general attitude retires prayer to insignificance and obscurity. By it, salvation and eternal life are put in the background. It cannot be too often affirmed, therefore, that the prime need of the Church is not men of money nor men of brains, but men of prayer. Leaders in the realm of religious activity are to be judged by their praying habits, and not by their money or social position. Those who must be placed in the forefront of the Church's business, must be, first of all, men who know how to pray.

God does not conduct His work, solely, with men of education or of wealth or of business capacity. Neither can He carry on His work through men of large intellects or of great culture, nor yet through men of great social eminence and influence. All these can be made to count provided they are not regarded as being primary. These men, by the simple fact of these qualities and conditions, cannot lead in God's work nor control His cause. Men of prayer, before anything else, are indispensable to the furtherance of the kingdom of God on earth. No other sort will fit in the scheme or do the deed. Men, great and influential in other things, but small in prayer, cannot do the work Almighty God has set out for His Church to do in this, His world.

Men who represent God and who stand here in His stead, men who are to build up His kingdom in this world, must be in an eminent sense men of prayer. whatever else they may have, whatever else they may lack, they must be men of prayer. Having everything else and lacking prayer, they must fall. Having prayer and lacking all else, they can succeed. Prayer must be the most conspicuous and the most potent factor in the character and conduct of men who undertake divine commission. God's business requires men who are versed in the business of praying.

It must be kept in mind that the praying to which the disciples of Christ is called by Scriptural authority and enforcement, is a valorous calling, for manly men. The men God wants and upon whom He depends, must work at prayer just as they work at their worldly calling. They must follow this business of praying through, just as they do their secular pursuits. Diligence, perseverance, heartiness, and courage, must all be in it if it is to succeed.

Everything secured by Gospel promise, defined by Gospel measure, and represented by Gospel treasure are to be found in prayer. All heights are scaled by it, all doors are opened to it, all victories are gained through it, and all grace distills on it. Heaven has all its good and all its help for men who pray.

How marked and strong is the injunction of Christ which sends men from the parade of public giving and praying to the privacy of their closets, where with shut doors, and in encircling silence they are alone in prayer with God!

In all ages, those who have carried out the divine will on the earth, have been men of prayer. The days of prayer are God's halcyon days. His heart, His oath, and His glory are committed to one issuance—that every knee should bow to Him. The day of the Lord, in a preeminent sense, will be a day of universal prayer.

God's cause does not suffer through lack of divine ability, but by reason of the lack of prayer-ability in man. God's action is just as much bound up in prayer at this time, as it was when He said to Abimelech, "Abraham shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." So also it was when God said to Job's friends, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept."

God's great plan for the redemption of mankind is as much bound up to prayer for its prosperity and success as when the decree creating the movement was issued from the Father, bearing on its frontage the imperative, universal and eternal condition, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession."

In many places an alarming state of things has come to pass, in that the many who are enrolled in our churches are not praying men and women. Many of those occupying prominent positions in church life are not praying men. It is greatly to be feared that much of the work of the Church is being done by those who are perfect strangers to the closet. Small wonder that the work does not succeed.

While it may be true that many in the Church say prayers, it is equally true that their praying is of the stereotyped order. Their prayers may be charged with sentiment, but they are tame, timid, and without fire or force. Even this sort of praying is done by a few straggling men to be found at prayer-meetings. Those whose names are to be found bulking large in our great Church assemblies are not men noted for their praying habits. Yet the entire fabric of the work in which they are engaged has, perforce, to depend on the adequacy of prayer. This fact is similar to the crisis which would be created were a country to have to admit in the face of an invading foe that it cannot fight and have no knowledge of the weapons whereby war is to be waged.

In all God's plans for human redemption, He proposes that men pray. The men are to pray in every place, in the church, in the closet, in the home, on sacred days and on secular days. All things and everything are dependent on the measure of men's praying.

Prayer is the genius and mainspring of life. We pray as we live; we live as we pray. Life will never be finer than the quality of the closet. The mercury of life will rise only by the warmth of the closet. Persistent non-praying eventually will depress life below zero.

To measure and weigh the conditions of prayer, is readily to discover why men do not pray in larger numbers. The conditions are so perfect, so blessed, that it is a rare character who can meet them. A heart all love, a heart that holds even its enemies in loving contemplation and prayerful concern, a heart from which all bitterness, revenge and envy are purged—how rare! Yet this is the only condition of mind and heart in which a man can expect to command the efficacy of prayer.

There are certain conditions laid down for authentic praying. Men are to pray, "lifting up holy hands"; hands here being the symbol of life. Hands unsoiled by stains of evil doing are the emblem of a life unsoiled by sin. Thus are men to come into the presence of God, thus are they to approach the throne of the Highest, where they can "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Here, then, is one reason why men do not pray. They are too worldly in heart and too secular in life to enter the closet; and even though they enter there, they cannot offer the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man, which availeth much."

Again, "hands" are the symbols of supplication. Outstretched hands stand for an appeal for help. It is the silent yet eloquent attitude of a helpless soul standing before God, appealing for mercy and grace. "Hands," too, are symbols of activity, power and conduct. Hands outstretched to God in prayer must be "holy hands," unstained hands. The word "holy" here means undefiled, unspotted, untainted, and religiously observing every obligation. How far remote is all this from the character of the sin-loving, worldly-minded, fleshly disposed men, soiled by fleshly lusts, spotted by worldly indulgence, unholy in heart and conduct! "He who seeks equity must do equity," is the maxim of earthly courts. So he who seeks God's good gifts must practice God's good deeds. This is the maxim of heavenly courts.

Prayer is sensitive, and always affected by the character and conduct of him who prays. Water cannot rise above its own level, and a spotless prayer cannot flow from a spotted heart. Straight praying is never born of crooked conduct. The men, what men are, behind their praying, that gives character to their supplication. The craven heart cannot do brave praying. Soiled men cannot make clean, pure supplication.

It is neither words, nor thoughts nor ideas, nor feelings, which shape praying, but character and conduct. Men must walk in upright fashion in order to be able to pray well. Bad character and unrighteous living break down praying until it becomes a mere shibboleth. Praying takes its tone and vigour from the life of the man or the woman exercising it. When character and conduct are at a low ebb, praying can but barely live, much less thrive.

The man of prayer, whether layman or preacher, is God's right-hand man. In the realm of spiritual affairs, he creates conditions, inaugurates movements, brings things to pass. By the fact and condition of their creation and redemption, all men are under obligation to pray. Every man can pray, and every man should pray. But when it comes to the affairs of the Kingdom, let it be said, at once, that a prayerless man in the Church of God is like a paralyzed organ of the physical body. He is out of place in the communion of saints, out of harmony with God, and out of accord with His purposes for mankind. A prayerless man handicaps the vigour and life of the whole system like a demoralized soldier is a menace to the force of which he forms part, in the day of battle. The absence of prayer lessens all the life-forces of the soul, cripples faith, sets aside holy living, shuts out heaven. Between praying saints and non-praying men, in Holy Scripture, the line is sharply drawn. Of Fletcher of Madeley—one of the praying saints—it is written that "He was far more abundant in his public labours than the greater part of his companions in the holy ministry. Yet these bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication to which he was wholly given up in private, which were almost uninterruptedly maintained from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer, and whatever employment in which he was engaged, this spirit of prayer was constantly manifested through them all. O God, raise up more men of praying like John Fletcher! How we do need, in this our day, men through whom God can work!

Without this he neither formed any design, nor entered upon any duty. Without this he neither read nor conversed. Without this, he neither visited nor received a visitor. There have been seasons of supplications in which he appeared to be carried out far beyond the ordinary limits of devotion, when, like his Lord upon the Mount of Transfiguration, while he continued to pour out his mighty prayer, the fashion of his countenance has been changed, and his face has appeared as the face of an angel."

V. PRAYERLESS CHRISTIANS

"If there was ever a time when Peter, James and John needed to remain awake it was in Gethsemane. If James had persisted in keeping awake it might have saved his decapitation a few years later. If Peter had stirred himself to really intercede for himself and others he would not have denied his Christ that night in the palace of Caiaphas."—H. W. Hodge.

There is great need in this day for Christian business men to inform their mundane affairs with the spirit of prayer. There is a great army of successful merchants of almost every kind who are members of Christ's Church and it is high time these men attended to this matter. This is but another version of the phrase, "putting God into business," the realization and restraint of His presence and of His fear in all the secularities of life. We need the atmosphere of the prayer-closet to pervade our public sales-rooms and counting-houses. The sanctity of prayer is needed to impregnate business. We need the spirit of Sunday carried over to Monday and continued until Saturday. But this cannot be done by prayerless men, but by men of prayer. We need business men to go about their concerns with the same reverence and responsibility with which they enter the closet. Men are badly needed who are devoid of greed, but who, with all their hearts carry God with them into the secular affairs of life.

Men of the world imagine prayer to be too impotent a thing to come into rivalry with business methods and worldly practices. Against such a misleading doctrine Paul sets the whole commands of God, the loyalty to Jesus Christ, the claims of pious character, and the demands of the salvation of the world. Men must pray, and put strength and heart into their praying. This is part of the primary business of life, and to it God has called men, first of all.

Praying men are God's agents on earth, the representative of government of heaven, set to a specific task on the earth. While it is true that the Holy Spirit, the angels of God, are agents of God in carrying forward the redemption of the human race, yet among them there must be praying men. For such men God has great use. He can make much of them, and in the past has done wonderful things through them. These are His instruments in carrying out God's great purposes on the earth. They are God's messengers, His watchmen, shepherds, workmen, who need not be ashamed. Fully equipped for the great work to which they are appointed, they honour God and bless the world.

Above all things beside, Christian men and women must, primarily, be leaders in prayer. No matter how conspicuous they may be in other activities, they fail if they are not conspicuous in prayer. They must give their brain and heart to prayer. Men who make and shape the program of Christ's Church, who map out its line of activity, should, themselves, be shaped and made by prayer. Men controlling the Church finances, her thought, her action—should all be men of prayer.

The progress to consummation of God's work in this world has two basic principles—God's ability to give and man's ability to ask. Failure in either one is fatal to the success of God's work on earth. God's inability to do or to give would put an end to redemption. Man's failure to pray would, just as surely, set a limit to the plan. But God's ability to do and to give has never failed and cannot fail; but man's ability to ask can fail, and often does. Therefore the slow progress which is being made toward the realization of a world won for Christ lies entirely with man's limited asking. There is need for the entire Church of God, on the earth, to betake itself to prayer. The Church upon its knees would bring heaven upon the earth.

The wonderful ability of God to do for us is thus expressed by Paul in one of his most comprehensive statements, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you," he says, "that ye, always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Study, I pray you, that remarkable statement—"God is able to make all grace abound." That is, He is able to give such sufficiency, that we may abound—overflow—to every good work. Why are we not more fully fashioned after this overflowing order? The answer is—lack of prayer-ability. "We have not because we ask not." We are feeble, weak and impoverished because of our failure to pray. God is restrained in doing because we are restrained by reason of our non-praying. All failures in securing heaven are traceable to lack of prayer or misdirected petition.

Prayer must be broad in its scope—it must plead for others. Intercession for others is the hall-mark of all true prayer. When prayer is confined to self and to the sphere of one's personal needs, it dies by reason of its littleness, narrowness and selfishness. Prayer must be broad and unselfish or it will perish. Prayer is the soul of a man stirred to plead with God for men. In addition to being interested in the eternal interests of one's own soul it must, in its very nature, be concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of others. One's ability to pray for self, finds its climax in the compassion its concern expresses for others.

In 1 Tim. 1, the Apostle Paul urges with singular and specific emphasis, that those who occupy positions of influence and places of authority, are to give themselves to prayer. "I will, therefore, that the men pray everywhere." This is the high calling of the men of the Church, and no calling is so engaging, so engrossing and so valuable that we can afford to relieve Christian men from the all-important vocation of secret prayer. Nothing whatever can take the place of prayer. Nothing whatever can atone for the neglect of praying. This is uppermost, first in point of importance and first in point of time. No man is so high in position, or in grace, to be exempt from an obligation to pray. No man is too big to pray, no matter who he is, nor what office he fills. The king on his throne is as much obligated to pray as the peasant in his cottage. None is so high and exalted in this world or so lowly and obscure as to be excused from praying. The help of every one is needed in prosecuting the work of God, and the prayer of each praying man helps to swell the aggregate. The leaders in place, in gifts and in authority are to be chiefs in prayer.

Civil and Church rulers shape the affairs of this world. And so civil and Church rulers themselves need to be shaped personally in spirit, heart and conduct, in truth and righteousness, by the prayers of God's people. This is in direct line with Paul's words: "I exhort therefore," he says, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for rulers and all that are in authority."

It is a sad day for righteousness when church politics instead of holy praying, shapes the administration of the Kingdom and elevates men to place and power. Why pray for all men? Because God wills the salvation of all men. God's children on earth must link their prayers to God's will. Prayer is to carry out the will of God. God wills the salvation of all men. His heart is set on this one thing. Our prayers must be the creation and exponent of God's will. We are to grasp humanity in our praying as God grasps humanity in His love, His interest and His plans to redeem humanity. Our sympathies, prayers, wrestling and ardent desires must run parallel with the will of God, broad, generous, world-wide and Godlike. The Christian man must in all things, first of all, be conformed to the will of God, but nowhere shall this royal devotion be more evident than in the salvation of the race of men. This high partnership with God, as His vicegerents on earth, is to have its fullest, richest, and most efficient exercise in prayer for all men.

Men are to pray for all men, are to pray especially for rulers in Church and state, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Peace on the outside and peace on the inside. Praying calms disturbing forces, allays tormenting fears, brings conflict to an end. Prayer tends to do away with turmoil. But even if there be external conflicts, it is well to have deep peace within the citadel of the soul. "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." Prayer brings the inner calm and furnishes the outward tranquillity. Praying rulers and praying subjects were they world-wide would allay turbulent forces, make wars to cease, and peace to reign.

Men must pray for all men that we may lead lives "in all godliness and honesty." That is with godliness and gravity. Godliness is to be like God. It is to be godly, to have God-likeness, having the image of God stamped upon the inner nature, and showing the same likeness in conduct and in temper. Almighty God is the very highest model, and to be like Him is to possess the highest character. Prayer moulds us into the image of God, and at the same time tends to mould others into the same image just in proportion as we pray for others. Prayer means to be God-like, and to be God-like is to love Christ and love God, to be one with the Father and the Son in spirit, character and conduct. Prayer means to stay with God till you are like Him. Prayer makes a godly man, and puts within him "the mind of Christ," the mind of humility, of self-surrender, of service, of pity, and of prayer. If we really pray, we will become more like God, or else we will quit praying. "Men are to pray everywhere," in the closet, in the prayer-meeting, about the family altar, and to do it, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Here is not only the obligation laid upon the men to pray, but instructions as to how they should pray. "Men must pray without wrath." That is, without bitterness against their neighbours or brethren; without the obstinacy and pertinacity of a strong will, and hard feelings, without an evil desire or emotion kindled by nature's fires in the carnal nature. Praying is not to be done by these questionable things, nor in company with such evil feelings, but "without" them, aloof and entirely separate from them. This is the sort of praying the men are called upon to do, the sort which God hears and the kind which prevails with God and accomplishes things. Such praying in the hands of Christian men become divine agencies in God's hands for carrying on God's gracious purposes and executing His designs in redemption. Prayer has a higher origin than man's nature. This is true whether man's nature as separate from the angelic nature, or man's carnal nature unrenewed and unchanged be meant. Prayer does not originate in the realms of the carnal mind. Such a nature is entirely foreign to prayer simply because "the carnal mind is enmity against God." It is by the new Spirit that we pray, the new spirit sweetened by the sugar of heaven perfumed with the fragrance of the upper world, and invigorated by a breath from the crystal sea. The "new spirit" is native to the skies, panting after the heavenly things, inspired by the breath of God. It is the praying temper from which all the old juices of the carnal, unregenerate nature have been expelled, and the fire of God has created the flame which has consumed worldly lusts, and the juices of the Spirit have been injected into the soul, and the praying is entirely divorced from wrath. Men are also to pray "without doubting." The Revised Version puts it, "without disputings." Faith in God, belief in God's Word, they must have "without question." No doubting or disputing must be in the mind. There must be no opinions, nor hesitancy, no questioning, no reasoning, no intellectual quibbling, no rebellion, but a strict, stead-fast loyalty of spirit to God, a life of loyalty in heart and intellect to God's Word. God has much to do with believing men, who have a living, transforming faith in Jesus Christ. These are God's children. A father loves his children, supplies their needs, hears their cries and answers their requests. A child believes his father, loves him, trusts in him, and asks him for what he needs, believing without doubting that his father will hear his requests. God has everything to do with answering the prayer of His children. Their troubles concern Him, and their prayers awaken Him. Their voice is sweet to Him. He loves to hear them pray, and He is never happier than to answer their prayers. Prayer is intended for God's ear. It is not man, but God who hears and answers prayer. Prayer covers the whole range of man's need. Hence, "in everything, by prayer and supplication," are "requests to be made known unto God." Prayer includes the entire range of God's ability. "Is anything too hard for God?" Prayer belongs to no favoured segment of man's need, but reaches to and embraces the entire circle of his wants, simply because God is the God of the whole man. God has pledged Himself to supply the needs of the whole man, physical, intellectual and spiritual. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Prayer is the child of grace, and grace is for the whole man, and for every one of the children of men.

("The Weapons Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 3-5 ; Edward McKendree Bounds (August 15, 1835 – August 24, 1913) was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer. Public Domain)

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 424-426)

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