



# ~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing



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## Worship Music

### Prayer

Lord, help me to put aside my fleshly pride and to do everything I can to understand my precious spouse. I confess that there are times when I just don't understand what my spouse is trying to say or do. I often get frustrated and allow myself to get upset. Therefore, Holy Spirit, I am telling You right now that I need Your assistance to remain calm, to be at peace, and to let sympathy flow from my heart in place of the aggravation I have allowed to pester me. Today I want to turn a new page in my life. I want to be the best friend my spouse has ever had. Help me recognize where I need to change in order to be what I need to be in this marriage relationship, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

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1 THEN NAOMI her mother-in-law said to Ruth, My daughter, shall I not seek rest or a home for you, that you may prosper? 2 And now is not Boaz, with whose maidens you were, our relative? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Wash and anoint yourself therefore, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, notice the place where he lies; then go and uncover his feet and lie down. And he will tell you what to do. 5 And Ruth said to her, All that you say to me I will do. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had told her. 7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then [Ruth] came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled, and he turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 And he said, Who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth your maidservant. Spread your wing [of protection] over your maidservant, for you are a next of kin. 10 And he said, Blessed be you of the Lord, my daughter. For you have made this last loving-kindness greater than the former, for you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, fear not. I will do for you all you require, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of strength (worth, bravery, capability). 12 It is true that I am your near kinsman; however, there is a kinsman nearer than I. 13 Remain tonight, and in the morning if he will perform for you the part of a kinsman, good; let him do it. But if he will not do the part of a kinsman for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will do the part of a kinsman for you. Lie down until the morning. 14 And she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another; for he said, Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor. 15 Also he said, Bring the mantle you are wearing and hold it. So [Ruth] held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and laid it on her. And she went into the town. 16 And when she came home, her mother-in-law said, How have you fared, my daughter? And Ruth told her all that the man had done for her. 17 And she said, He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said to me, Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law. 18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he finishes the matter today.

### Chapter 3

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our family, with whose maidens you have been working? Behold, he winnows the barley tonight in the threshingfloor. So wash yourself, put on your perfume, and your beautiful gown, and get down to the threshingfloor: but don't let them see you, until they have finished eating and drinking. And it shall be when he lies down to sleep, that you mark carefully where he's lying, and you go in, and uncover his feet, and lay down there; and he will tell you what you're to do. And she said unto her, All that you say to me I will do. So she went down to the floor, and she did according to all that her mother in law had instructed her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, his heart was merry, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: she came very quietly, and uncovered his feet, and laid down. Now about midnight, he woke up, and was afraid; as he was rolling over he became aware of the fact that a woman was lying there at his feet. And he said, Who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth your handmaid: spread therefore thy blanket or covering over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman (Rth 3:1-9).

Now under the law because God sought to preserve families, if a man married a wife, and died before they had any children, then it was his brother's obligation to take that woman as his wife, so that the first son that was born would be named after the dead brother, so that the family's name would continue in Israel.

In the book of Genesis, about the thirty-eighth chapter or so, we find that Judah had a son who took a gal as his wife, and he died without having any children. Tamar was the name of the wife. So the second son took her and he died without having any children. Judah was afraid to give the third son. So he said, "Well, he's too young to get married. Wait for him." Then long after the guy was old enough to get married, Judah hadn't really come through with the third son. So Tamar took things into her own hands. But it's a case where this law was being enacted, and Judah was in the wrong for withholding this son. It was just the law to keep the family name alive.

Now because Elimelech had died, and his two sons had died, the family name was about to die out. So she was actually asking Boaz to take the part of the goel, the kinsman redeemer, and to have a son by her that could be named after the family of Elimelech so that that name would not die as a family in Israel. Actually, what she was asking, "Cover me with this covering of the family, because you are a goel, you are the kinsman redeemer."

And he said to Ruth, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for you have showed more kindness at the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as you followed not the young men, whether they were poor or rich (Rth 3:10).

Now Boaz was probably an older man. He was very flattered that this younger girl, rather than following after these young guys would ask him to fulfill this kinsman relationship, this goel kinsman redeemer relationship. Again notice his, "Blessed be thou of the Lord," he shows all the way through good, godly characteristics.

And he said,

Now my daughter, fear not; for I will do unto you all that you require: for all the city of my people know that you are a virtuous woman (Rth 3:11).

Ruth's reputation had gotten around. She was a virtuous girl. Her taking care of her mother-in-law, her whole attitude of really worshiping and serving God, word had gotten around concerning Ruth, "She's a virtuous girl." He said, "I will do all that the law requires and what you're requiring. Don't be afraid, I'm gonna do it."

But it is true that I am a near kinsman: ["I'm a close family relative."] however there is a kinsman that is closer than I am. Now you tarry tonight, and in the morning, [if he will not perform unto thee or,] if he will perform to you the part of a kinsman, fine; let him perform unto thee: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until morning (Rth 3:12-13).

Now not always would they fulfill this part. Sometimes they didn't like the gal. Their brother married sort of—all right, you. And he died and he didn't have any children, and you say, "Hey no way I don't want her."

So you take off your shoe and hand it to her like "Hey you're a dirty shoe as far as I'm concerned." You're giving up your right. "I don't want to marry you. I don't want to have anything to do with you." She then would spit in your face, and you would be called "The man from whom the shoe was loosed in Israel." You were considered sort of a dirty dog kind of a guy because you didn't fulfill the family obligations, no family loyalty. So that was the little ritual and that oftentimes happened. The fellow didn't want to carry through. "I don't want to marry her. I don't want the obligations of her, not interested." So he'd take off his shoe and hand it to her.

So he said, "Ruth, don't worry I will do it." But the hitch is there's another fellow who is actually closer of kin and he has the right first to be the kinsman. "If he is, fine, but if he doesn't then I will be the kinsman unto thee. I will raise up a child, and I will take you as my wife, and I will fulfill this obligation. So don't worry one way or the other it's gonna be taken care of."

So he said, "Lie down until morning."

And so she lay at his feet until morning: and she rose up before any one could know each other. [In other words it was still so dark you couldn't recognize anybody.] And he said, Don't let it be known that a woman was on the threshingfloor tonight. And so he said, Bring me the veil that you had on you, and she held it. And when she held it, he measured out six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother in law, [It was still dark, and so, Naomi said, "Who is it?"] and she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And so Ruth told her all that Boaz had said and done. And she said, These six measures of barley he gave to me; for he said, Don't go empty to your mother in law. Then Naomi said, [She's a wise old gal, she's been around. She said,] Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall: for this man will not rest, until he's gotten everything taken care of (Rth 3:14-18). (Through The Bible C-2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

## VI. PRAYING MEN AT A PREMIUM

"Our Redeemer was in the Garden of Gethsemane. His hour was come. He felt as if He would be strengthened somewhat, if He had two or three disciples near Him. His three chosen disciples were within a stone's cast of the scene of His agony; but they were all asleep that the Scripture might be fulfilled—I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me.' The eight, in the distance, were good and true disciples; but they were only ordinary men, or men with a commonplace call."—Alexander Whyte.

No insistence in the Bible is more pressing than the injunction it lays upon men to pray. No exhortation contained therein is more hearty, more solemn, and more stirring. No principle is more strongly inculcated than that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." In view of this enjoinder it is pertinent to inquire as to whether Christian people are praying men and women in anything like body and bulk? Is prayer a fixed course in the schools of the Church? In the Sunday school, the home, the colleges, have we any graduates in the school of prayer? Is the Church producing those who have diplomas from the great university of prayer? This is what God requires, what He commands, and it is those who possess such qualifications that He must have to accomplish His purposes and to carry out the work of His Kingdom on earth.

And it is earnest praying that had need to be done. Languid praying, without heart or strength, with neither fire nor tenacity, defeats its own avowed purpose. The prophet of olden times laments that in a day which needed strenuous praying there was no one who "stirred up himself to take hold of God." Christ charges us "not to faint" in our praying. Laxity and indifference are great hindrances to prayer, both to the practice of praying and the process of receiving; it requires a brave, strong, fearless and insistent spirit to engage in successful prayer. Diffuseness, too, interferes with effectiveness. Too many petitions break tension and unity, and breed neglect. Prayers should be specific and urgent. Too many words, like too much width, breeds shallows and sand-bars. A single objective which absorbs the whole being and inflames the entire man, is the properly constraining force in prayer.

It is easy to see how prayer was a decreed factor in the dispensations preceding the coming of Jesus, and how that their leaders had to be men of prayer; how that God's mightiest revelation of Himself was a revelation made through prayer. And, finally, how that Jesus Christ, in His personal ministry, and in His relation to God, was great and constant in prayer. His labours and dispensation overflowed with fullness in proportion to His prayers. The possibilities of His praying were unlimited and the possibilities of His ministry were in keeping. The necessity of His praying was equaled only by the constancy with which He practiced it during His early life.

The dispensation of the Holy Spirit is a dispensation of prayer, in a preeminent sense. Here prayer has an essential and vital relation. Without depreciating the possibilities and necessities of prayer in all the preceding dispensations of God in the world it must be declared that it is in this latter dispensation that the engagements and demands of prayer are given their greatest authority, their possibilities rendered unlimited and their necessity insuperable. These days of ours have sore need of a generation of praying men, a band of men and women through whom God can bring His great and His greatest movements more fully into the world. The Lord our God is not straitened within Himself, but He is straitened in us, by reason of our little faith and weak praying. A breed of Christian is greatly needed who will seek tirelessly after God,—who will give Him no rest, day and night, until He hearken to their cry. The times demand praying men who are all athirst for God's glory, who are broad and unselfish in their desires, quenchless for God, who seek Him late and early, and who will give themselves no rest until the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Men and women are needed whose prayers will give to the world the utmost power of God; who will make His promises to blossom with rich and full results. God is waiting to hear us and challenges us to bring Him to do this thing by our praying. He is asking us, today, as He did His ancient Israel, to "prove Him now herewith." Behind God's Word is God Himself, and we read: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, his Maker: Ask of me of things to come and concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my bands, command ye me." As though God places Himself in the hands and at the disposal of His people who pray—as indeed He does.

The dominant element of all praying is faith, that is conspicuous, cardinal and emphatic. Without such faith it is impossible to please God, and equally impossible to pray.

There is a current conception of spiritual duties which tends to separate the pulpit and the pew, as though the pulpit bore the entire burden of spiritual concerns, and while the pew was concerned only with duties that relate to the lower sphere of the secular and worldly. Such a view needs drastic correction. God's cause, its obligations, efforts and successes, lie with equal pressure on pulpit and pew.

But the man in the pew is not taxed with the burden of prayer as he ought to be, and as he must be, ere any new visitation of power come to the Church. The Church never will be wholly for God until the pews are filled with praying men. The Church cannot be what God wants it to be until those of its members who are leaders in business, politics, law, and society, are leaders in prayer.

God began His early movements in the world with men of prayer. He chose such a man to be the father of that race who became His chosen people in the world for hundreds of years, to whom He committed His oracles, and from whom sprang the Promised Messiah. Abraham, a leader of God's cause, was preeminently a praying man. When we consider his conduct and character, we readily see how prayer ruled and swayed this great leader of God's people in the wilderness. "Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God," and it is an outstanding fact that wherever he pitched his tent and camped for a season, with his household, there he erected the altar of sacrifice and of prayer. His was a personal and a family religion, in which prayer was a prominent and abiding factor.

Prayer is the medium of divine revelation. It is through prayer that God reveals Himself to the spiritual soul today, just as in the Old Testament days He made His revelations to the men who prayed. God shows Himself to the man who prays. "God is with thee in all that thou doest." This was the clear conviction of those who would fain make a covenant with Abraham, and the reason for this tribute was the belief commonly held concerning the patriarch that, not only was he a man of prayer, but a man whose prayers God would answer. This is the summary and secret of divine rule in the Church. In all ages God has ruled the Church by prayerful men. When prayer fails, the divine rulership falls. As we have seen, Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a prince and a priest in prayer. He had remarkable influence with God. God stays His vengeance while Abraham prays. His mercy is suspended and conditioned on Abraham's praying. His visitations of wrath are removed by the praying of this ruler in Israel. The movements of God are influenced by the prayers of Abraham, the friend of God. Abraham's righteous prayerfulness permits him to share the secrets of God's counsels, while the knowledge of these secrets draws out and intensifies his praying. With Abraham, the altar of sacrifice is hard by the altar of prayer. With him the altar of prayer sanctifies the altar of sacrifice. To Abimelech God said, "Abraham is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."

Christian people must pray for men. On one occasion, Samuel said unto the people, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." Fortunate for these sinful people who had rejected God, and desired a human king, that they had in Israel a man of prayer. The royal way to enlarge personal grace is to pray for others. Intercessory prayer is a means of grace to those who exercise it. We enter the richest fields of spiritual growth and gather its priceless riches in the avenues of intercessory prayer. To pray for men is of divine nomination, and represents the highest form of Christian service.

Men must pray, and men must be prayed for. The Christian must pray for all things, of course, but prayers for men are infinitely more important, just as men are infinitely more important than things. So also prayers for men are far more important than prayers for things because men more deeply concern God's will and the work of Jesus Christ than things. Men are to be cared for, sympathized with and prayed for, because sympathy, pity, compassion and care accompany and precede prayer for men, when they are not called out for things.

All this makes praying a real business, not child's play, not a secondary affair, nor a trivial matter but a serious business. The men who have made a success of praying have made a business of praying. It is a process demanding the time, thought, energy and hearts of mankind. Prayer is business for time, business for eternity. It is a man's business to pray, transcending all other business and taking precedence over all other vocations, professions or occupations. Our praying concerns ourselves, all men, their greatest interests, even the salvation of their immortal souls. Praying is a business which takes hold of eternity and the things beyond the grave. It is a business which involves earth and heaven. All worlds are touched and worlds are influenced by prayer. It has to do with God and men, angels and devils.

Jesus was preeminently a leader in prayer, and His praying is an incentive to prayer. How prominently prayer stands out in His life! The leading events of His earthly career are distinctly marked by prayer. The wonderful experience and glory of the Transfiguration was preceded by prayer, and was the result of the praying of our Lord. What words He used as He prayed we know not, nor do we know for what He prayed. But doubtless it was night, and long into its hours the Master prayed. It was while He prayed the darkness fled, and His form was lit with unearthly splendour. Moses and Elijah came to yield to Him not only the palm of law and prophecy, but the palm of praying. None other prayed as did Jesus nor had any such a glorious manifestation of the divine presence or heard so clearly the revealing voice of the Father, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." Happy disciples to be with Christ in the school of prayer!

How many of us have failed to come to this glorious Mount of Transfiguration because we were unacquainted with the transfiguring power of prayer! It is the going apart to pray, the long, intense seasons of prayer, in which we engage which makes the face to shine, transfigures the character, makes even dull, earthly garments to glisten with heavenly splendour. But more than this: it is real praying which makes eternal things real, close and tangible, and which brings the glorified visitors and the heavenly visions. Transfigured lives would not be so rare if there were more of this transfigured praying. These heavenly visits would not be so few if there was more of this transfigured praying.

How difficult it appears to be for the Church to understand that the whole scheme of redemption depends upon men of prayer! The work of our Lord, while here on the earth, as well of the Apostle Paul was, by teaching and example, to develop men of prayer, to whom the future of the Church should be committed. How strange that instead of learning this simple and all important lesson, the modern Church has largely overlooked it! We have need to turn afresh to that wondrous Leader of spiritual Israel, our Lord Jesus Christ, who by example and precept enjoins us to prayer and to the great Apostle to the Gentiles, who by virtue of his praying habits and prayer lessons is a model and an example to God's people in every age and clime.

## VII. THE MINISTRY AND PRAYER

"Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians else he were disqualified for the office he has undertaken. If you as ministers are not very prayerful you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only will you need to be pitied but your people also, and the day cometh in which you will be ashamed and confounded. Our seasons of fastings and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven's gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central glory."—Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Preachers are God's leaders. They are divinely called to their holy office and high purpose and, primarily, are responsible for the condition of the Church. Just as Moses was called of God to lead Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness into the Promised Land, so, also, does God call His ministers to lead His spiritual Israel through this world unto the heavenly land. They are divinely commissioned to leadership, and are by precept and example to teach God's people what God would have them be. Paul's counsel to the young preacher Timothy is in point: "Let no man despise thy youth," he says, "but be thou an example of the believers, in word, conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." God's ministers shape the Church's character, and give tone and direction to its life. The prefacing sentence of the letter to each of the seven churches in Asia reads, "To the angel of the Church," seeming to indicate that the angel—the minister—was in the same state of mind and condition of life as the membership and that these "angels" or ministers were largely responsible for the spiritual condition of things existing in each Church. The "angel" in each case was the preacher, teacher, or leader. The first Christians knew full well and felt this responsibility. In their helplessness, consciously felt, they cried out, "And who is sufficient for things?" as the tremendous responsibility pressed upon their hearts and heads. The only reply to such a question was, "God only." So they were necessarily compelled to look beyond themselves for help and throw themselves on prayer to secure God. More and more as they prayed, did they feel their responsibility, and more and more by prayer did they get God's help. They realized that their sufficiency was of God. Prayer belongs in a very high and important sense to the ministry. It takes vigour and elevation of character to administer the prayer-office. Praying prophets have frequently been at a premium in the history of God's people. In every age the demand has been for leaders in Israel who pray. God's watchmen must always and everywhere be men of prayer.

It ought to be no surprise for ministers to be often found on their knees seeking divine help under the responsibility of their call. These are the true prophets of the Lord, and these are they who stand as mouthpieces of God to a generation of wicked and worldly-minded men and women. Prayer preachers are boldest, the truest and the swiftest ministers of God. They mount up highest and are nearest to Him who has called them. They advance more rapidly and in Christian living are most like God. In reading the record of the four evangelists, we cannot but be impressed by the supreme effort made by our Lord to rightly instruct the twelve Apostles in the things which would properly qualify them for the tremendous tasks which would be theirs after He had gone back to the bosom of the Father. His solicitude was for the Church that she should have men, holy in life and in heart, and who would know full well from whence came their strength and power in the work of the ministry. A large part of Christ's teaching was addressed to these chosen Apostles, and the training of the twelve occupied much of His thought and consumed much of His time. In all that training, prayer was laid down as a basic principle. We find the same thing to be true in the life and work of the Apostle Paul. While he addressed himself to the edification of the churches to whom he ministered and wrote, it was in his mind and purpose to rightly instruct and prepare ministers to whom would be committed the interests of God's people. The two epistles to Timothy were addressed to a young preacher, while that to Titus was also written to a young minister. And Paul's design appears to have been to give to each of them such instruction as would be needed rightly to do the work of the ministry to which they had been called by the Spirit of God. Underlying these instructions was the foundation-stone of prayer, since by no means would they be able to "show themselves approved unto God, workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," unless they were men of prayer. The highest welfare of the Church of God on earth depends largely upon the ministry, and so Almighty God has always been jealous of His watchmen—His preachers. His concern has been for the character of the men who minister at His altars in holy things. They must be men who lean upon Him, who look to Him, and who continually seek Him for wisdom, help and power effectively to do the work of the ministry. And so He has designed men of prayer for the holy office, and has relied upon them successively to perform the tasks He has assigned them. God's great works are to be done as Christ did them; are to be done, indeed, with increased power received from the ascended and exalted Christ. These works are to be done by prayer. Men must do God's work in God's way, and to God's glory, and prayer is a necessity to its successful accomplishment. The thing far above all other things in the equipment of the preacher is prayer. Before everything else, he must be a man who makes a specialty of prayer. A prayerless preacher is a misnomer. He has either missed his calling, or has grievously failed God who called him into the ministry. God wants men who are not ignoramuses, who "study to show themselves approved." Preaching the Word is essential; social qualities are not to be underestimated, and education is good; but under and above all else, prayer must be the main plank

in the platform of the man who goes forth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to a lost and hungry world. The one weak spot in our Church institutions lies just here. Prayer is not regarded as being the primary factor in church life and activity, and other things, good in their places, are made primary. First things need to be put first, and the first thing in the equipment of a minister is prayer.

Our Lord is the pattern for all preachers, and, with Him, prayer was the law of life. By it He lived. It was the inspiration of His toil, the source of His strength, the spring of His joy. With our Lord prayer was no sentimental episode, nor an afterthought, nor a pleasing, diverting prelude, nor an interlude, nor a parade or form. For Jesus, prayer was exacting, all-absorbing, paramount. It was the call of a sweet duty to Him, the satisfying of a restless yearning, the preparation for heavy responsibilities, and the meeting of a vigorous need. This being so, the disciple must be as his Lord, the servant as his Master. As was the Lord Himself, so also must be those whom He has called to be His disciples. Our Lord Jesus Christ chose His twelve Apostles only after He had spent a night in praying; and we may rest assured that He sets the same high value on those He calls to His ministry, in this our own day and time. No feeble or secondary place was given to prayer in the ministry of Jesus. It comes first—emphatic, conspicuous, controlling. Of prayerful habits, of a prayerful spirit, given to long solitary communion with God, Jesus was above all else, a man of prayer. The crux of His earthly history, in New Testament terminology, is condensed to a single statement, to be found in Hebrews 5:7: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." As was their Lord and Master, whose they are and whom they serve, so let His ministers be. Let Him be their pattern, their example, their leader and teacher. Much reference is made in some quarters about "following Christ," but it is confined to the following of Him in modes and ordinances, as if salvation were wrapped up in the specific way of doing a thing. "The path of prayer Thyself hath trod," is the path along which we are to follow Him, and in no other. Jesus was given as a leader to the people of God, and no leader ever exemplified more the worth and necessity of prayer. Equal in glory with the Father, anointed and sent on His special mission by the Holy Spirit, His incarnate birth, His high commission, His royal anointing—all these were His but they did not relieve Him from the exacting claims of prayer. Rather did they tend to impose these claims upon Him with greater authority. He did not ask to be excused from the burden of prayer; He gladly accepted it, acknowledged its claims and voluntarily subjected Himself to its demands. His leadership was preeminent, and His praying was preeminent. Had it not been, His leadership had been neither preeminent nor divine. If, in true leadership, prayer had been dispensable, then certainly Jesus could have dispensed with it. But He did not, nor can any of His followers who desire effectiveness in Christian activity do other than follow their Lord. While Jesus Christ practiced praying Himself, being personally under the law of prayer, and while His parables and miracles were but exponents of prayer, He laboured directly to teach His disciples the specific art of praying. He said little or nothing about how to preach or what to preach. But He spent His strength and time in teaching men how to speak to God, how to commune with Him, and how to be with Him. He knew full well that he who has learned the craft of talking to God, will be well versed in talking to men. We may turn aside for a moment to observe that this was the secret of the wonderful success of the early Methodist preachers, who were far from being learned men. But with all their limitations, they were men of prayer, and they did great things for God.

All ability to talk to men is measured by the ability with which a preacher can talk to God for men. He "who ploughs not in his closet, will never reap in his pulpit." The fact must ever be kept in the forefront and emphasized that Jesus Christ trained His disciples to pray. This is the real meaning of that saying, "The Training of the Twelve." It must be kept in mind that Christ taught the world's preachers more about praying than He did about preaching. Prayer was the great factor in the spreading of His Gospel. Prayer conserved and made efficient all other factors. Yet He did not discount preaching when He stressed praying, but rather taught the utter dependence of preaching on prayer. "The Christian's trade is praying," declared Martin Luther. Every Jewish boy had to learn a trade. Jesus Christ learned two, the trade of a carpenter, and that of praying. The one trade subserved earthly uses; the other served His divine and higher purposes. Jewish custom committed Jesus when a boy to the trade of a carpenter; the law of God bound Him to praying from His earliest years, and remained with Him to the end. Christ is the Christian's example, and every Christian must pattern after Him. Every preacher must be like his Lord and Master, and must learn the trade of praying. He who learns well the trade of praying masters the secret of the Christian art, and becomes a skilled workman in God's workshop, one who needeth not to be ashamed, a worker together with his Lord and Master. "Pray without ceasing," is the trumpet call to the preachers of our time. If the preachers will get their thoughts clothed with the atmosphere of prayer, if they will prepare their sermons on their knees, a gracious outpouring of God's Spirit will come upon the earth.

The one indispensable qualification for preaching is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it was for the bestowal of this indispensable gift that the disciples were charged to tarry in Jerusalem. The absolute necessity there is for receiving this gift if success is to attend the efforts of the ministry, is found in the command the first disciples had to stay in Jerusalem till they received it, and also with the instant and earnest prayerfulness with which they sought it. In obedience to their Lord's command to tarry in that city till they were endued with power from on high, they immediately, after He left them for heaven, entered on securing it by continued and earnest prayer. "These all with one accord, continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren." To this same thing John refers in his First Epistle. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," he says. It is this divine unction that preachers of the present day should sincerely desire, pray for, remaining unsatisfied till the blessed gift be richly bestowed. Another allusion to this same important procedure is made by our Lord shortly after His resurrection, when He said to His disciples: "And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." At the same time Jesus directed the attention of His disciples to the statement of John the Baptist concerning the Spirit, the identical thing for which He had commanded them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem—"power from on high." Alluding to John the Baptist's words Jesus said, "For John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Peter at a later date said of our Lord: "God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power." These are the divine statements of the mission and ministry of the Holy Spirit to preachers of that day and the same divine statements apply with equal force to the preachers of this day. God's ideal minister is a God-called, divinely anointed, Spirit-touched man, separated unto God's work, set apart from secularities and questionable affairs, baptized from above, marked, sealed and owned by the Spirit, devoted to his Master and His ministry. These are the divinely-appointed requisites for a preacher of the Word; without them, he is inadequate, and inevitably unfruitful. Today, there is no dearth of preachers who deliver eloquent sermons on the need and nature of revival, and advance elaborate plans for the spread of the kingdom of God, but the praying preachers are far more rare and the greatest benefactor this age can have is a man who will bring the preachers, the Church and the people back to the practice of real praying. The reformer needed just now is the praying reformer.

The leader Israel requires is one who, with clarion voice, will call the ministry back to their knees. There is considerable talk of the coming revival in the air, but we need to have the vision to see that the revival we need and the only one that can be worth having is one that is born of the Holy Spirit, which brings deep conviction for sin, and regeneration for those who seek God's face. Such a revival comes at the end of a season of real praying, and it is utter folly to talk about or expect a revival without the Holy Spirit operating in His peculiar office, conditioned on much earnest praying. Such a revival will begin in pulpit and pew alike, will be promoted by both preacher and lay-man working in harmony with God. The heart is the lexicon of prayer; the life the best commentary on prayer, and the outward bearing its fullest expression. The character is made by prayer; the life is perfected by prayer. And this the ministry needs to learn as thoroughly as the laymen. There is but one rule for both. So averse was the general body of Christ's disciples to prayer, having so little taste for it, and having so little sympathy with Him in the deep things of prayer, and its mightier struggles, that the Master had to select a circle of three more apt scholars—Peter, James and John—who had more of sympathy, and relish for this divine work, and take them aside that they might learn the lesson of prayer. These men were nearer to Jesus, fuller of sympathy, and more helpful to Him because they were more prayerful. Blessed, indeed, are those disciples whom Jesus Christ, in this day, calls into a more intimate fellowship with Him, and who, readily responding to the call, are found much on their knees before Him. Distressing, indeed, is the condition of those servants of Jesus who, in their hearts, are averse to the exercise of the ministry of prayer. All the great eras of our Lord, historical and spiritual, were made or fashioned by His praying. In like manner His plans and great achievements were born in prayer and impregnated by the spirit thereof. As was the Master, so also must His servant be; as his Lord did in the great eras of His life, so should the disciple do when faced by important crises. "To your knees, O Israel!" should be the clarion-call to the ministry of this generation. The highest form of religious life is attained by prayer. The richest revelations of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—are made, not to the learned, the great or the "noble" of earth, but men of prayer. "For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," to whom God makes known the deep things of God, and reveals the higher things of His character, but to the lowly, inquiring, praying ones. And again must it be said, his is as true of preachers as of laymen. It is the spiritual man who prays, and to praying ones God makes His revelations through the Holy Spirit. Praying preachers have always brought the greater glory to God, have moved His Gospel onward with its greatest, speediest rate and power. A non-praying preacher and a non-praying Church may flourish outwardly and advance in many aspects of their life. Both preacher and church may become synonyms for success, but unless it rest on a praying basis all success will eventually crumble into deadened life and ultimate decay. "Ye have not because ye ask not," is the solution of all spiritual weakness both in the personal life and in the pulpit. Either that or it is, "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss." Real praying lies at the foundation of all real success of the ministry in the things of God. The stability, energy and facility with which God's kingdom is established in this world are dependent upon prayer. God has made it so, and so God is anxious for men to pray. Especially is He concerned that His chosen ministers shall be men of prayer, and so gives that wonderful statement in order to encourage His ministers to pray, which is found in Matthew 6:9: "But I say unto you, 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." Thus both command and direct promise give accent to His concern that they shall pray. Pause and think on these familiar words. "Ask, and it shall be given you." That itself would seem to be enough to set us all, laymen and preachers, to praying, so direct, simple and unlimited. These words open all the treasures of heaven to us, simply by asking for them. If we have not studied the prayers of Paul, primarily a preacher to the Gentiles, we can have but a feeble view of the great necessity for prayer, and how much it is worth in the life and the work of a minister of the Gospel. Furthermore, we shall have but a very limited view of the possibilities of the Gospel to enrich and make strong and perfect Christian character, as well as to equip preachers for their high and holy task. Oh, when will we learn the simple yet all important lesson that the one great thing needed in the life of a preacher to help him in his personal life, to keep his soul alive to God, and to give efficacy to the Word preached by him, is real, constant prayer! Paul with prayer uppermost in his mind, assures the Colossians that "Epaphras is always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand complete and perfect in all the will of God." To this high state of grace, "complete in all the will of God," he prays they may come. So prayer was the force which was to bring them to that elevated, vigorous and stable state of heart. This is in line with Paul's teaching to the Ephesians, "And he gave some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," where it is evidently affirmed that the whole work of the ministry is not merely to induce sinners to repent, but it is also the "perfecting of the saints." And so Epaphras "laboured fervently in prayers" for this thing.

Certainly he was himself a praying man, in thus so earnestly praying for these early Christians. The Apostles put out their force in order that Christians should honour God by the purity and consistency of their outward lives. They were to reproduce the character of Jesus Christ. They were to perfect His image in themselves, imbibe His temper and reflect His carriage in all their tempers and conduct. They were to be imitators of God as dear children, to be holy as He was holy. Thus even laymen were to preach by their conduct and character, just as the ministry preached with their mouths. To elevate the followers of Christ to these exalted heights of Christian experience, they were in every way true in the ministry of God's Word, in the ministry of prayer, in holy consuming zeal, in burning exhortation, in rebuke and reproof. Added to all these, sanctifying all these, invigorating all these, and making all of them salutary, they centered and exercised constantly the force of mightiest praying. "Night and day praying exceedingly," that is, praying out of measure, with intense earnestness, superabundantly, beyond measure, exceeding abundantly. "Night and day praying exceeding abundantly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. "It was after this fashion that these Apostles—the first preachers in the early Church—laboured in prayer. And only those who labour after the same fashion are the true successors of these Apostles. This is the true, the Scriptural "apostolical succession," the succession of simple faith, earnest desire for holiness of heart and life, and zealous praying. These are the things today which make the ministry strong, faithful and efficient, "workmen who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

**Jesus Christ, God's Leader and Commander of His people, lived and suffered under this law of prayer. All His personal conquests in His life on earth were won by obedience to this law, while the conquests which have been won by His representatives since He ascended to heaven, were gained only when this condition of prayer was heartily and fully met. Christ was under this one prayer condition. His Apostles were under the same prayer condition. His saints are under it, and even His angels are under it. By every token, therefore, preachers are under the same prayer law. Not for one moment are they relieved or excused from obedience to the law of prayer. It is their very life, the source of their power, the secret of their religious experience and communion with God.**

**Christ could do nothing without prayer. Christ could do all things by prayer. The Apostles were helpless without prayer—and were absolutely dependent upon it for success in defeating their spiritual foes. They could do all things by prayer.**

**("The Weapon Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 3 ; 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.)**

**Ps 37:3-5 — Trust (lean on, rely on, and be confident) in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and feed surely on His faithfulness, and truly you shall be fed. 4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord [roll and repose each care of your load on Him]; trust (lean on, rely on, and be confident) also in Him and He will bring it to pass.**

**Isa 28:16 — Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tested Stone, a precious Cornerstone of sure foundation; he who believes (trusts in, relies on, and adheres to that Stone) will not be ashamed or give way or hasten away [in sudden panic].**

**Isa 30:7 — For Egypt's help is worthless and toward no purpose. Therefore I have called her Rahab Who Sits Still.**

**( Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 398-399)**

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