



~ 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, I ask You to help me learn to operate in this supernatural, life-changing, high-level love as in 1 Corin. 13. Please help me to quit judging others for the problems in their lives and to start thinking about how I can protect and cover them in times of difficulty. Holy Spirit, please help me believe the best about them. I also ask You for the strength to remain committed—to stick by their side until the victory has been won and they have become everything You intended for them to be. I am anticipating a new surge of Your power and strength right now to help me get started on this path, and I'll keep believing and confidently expecting until I see the results in my life that I know You want. Thank You for convicting me when necessary, for I am not a judge or a miniature Holy Spirit, I ask for Your will in every situation in life, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1 BUT THE Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. 2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the Israelites made themselves the dens which are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3 For whenever Israel had sown their seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and destroy the crops as far as Gaza and leave no nourishment for Israel, and no ox or sheep or donkey. 5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came like locusts for multitude; both they and their camels could not be counted. So they wasted the land as they entered it. 6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the Israelites cried to the Lord. 7 And when they cried to the Lord because of Midian, 8 The Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites, who said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. 9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out from before you and gave you their land. 10 And I said to you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed My voice. 11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak (terebinth) at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, and his son Gideon was beating wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of [fearless] courage. 13 And Gideon said to him, O sir, if the Lord is with us, why is all this befallen us? And where are all His wondrous works of which our fathers told us, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian. 14 The Lord turned to him and said, Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? 15 Gideon said to Him, Oh Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. 16 The Lord said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall smite the Midianites as one man. 17 Gideon said to Him, If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You Who talks with me. 18 Do not leave here, I pray You, until I return to You and bring my offering and set it before You. And He said, I will wait until you return. 19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a kid and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them to Him under the oak and presented them. 20 And the Angel of God said to him, Take the meat and unleavened cakes and lay them on this rock and pour the broth over them. And he did so. 21 Then the Angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes, and there flared up fire from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. Then the Angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. 22 And when Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face! 23 The Lord said to him, Peace be to you, do not fear; you shall not die. 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, The Lord is Peace. To this day it still stands in Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. 25 That night the Lord said to Gideon, Take your father's bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the Asherah [symbol of the goddess Asherah] that is beside it; 26 And build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this stronghold with stones laid in proper order. Then take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down. 27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him, but because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night. 28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the Asherah was cut down that was beside it, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built. 29 And they said to one another, Who has done this thing? And when they searched and asked, they were told, Gideon son of Joash has done this thing. 30 Then the men of the city commanded Joash, Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it. 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? He who will contend for Baal, let him be put to death while it is still morning. If Baal is a god, let him contend for himself because one has pulled down his altar. 32 Therefore on that day he called Gideon Jerubbaal, meaning, Let Baal contend against him, because he had pulled down his altar. 33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came together and, crossing the Jordan, encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon with Himself and took possession of him, and he blew a trumpet, and [the clan of] Abiezer was gathered to him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and the Manassites were called to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, to Zebulun, and to Naphtali, and they came up to meet them. 36 And Gideon said to God, If You will deliver Israel by my hand as You have said, 37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will deliver Israel by my hand, as You have said. 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the dew out of the fleece, he wrung from it a bowlful of water. 39 And Gideon said to God, Let not your anger be kindled against me, and I will speak but this once. Let me make trial only this once with the fleece, I pray you; let it now be dry only upon the fleece and upon all the ground let there be dew. 40 And God did so that night, for it was dry on the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

← Chapter 6; So again the rest for forty days but then in chapter six,

AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: because of the Midianites the children of Israel made themselves dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till they are come to Gaza, they left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. And they came up with their cattle and their tents, and as multitude, they were like grasshoppers; for both they and their camels were without number: they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said to them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, I brought you forth out of the house of bondage; I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, out of the hand of that oppressed you, I drove them out from before you, I gave you their land; I said unto you, I am JEHOVAH your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice (Jdg 6:1-10).

So the situation of this particular apostasy, turning their hearts away from God, God brought now the Midianites against them, tremendous number of people along with the Amalekites. And Gaza is about the southern most point along the Mediterranean. So by the time they got to Gaza they had gone through the entire land. Coming from the east, clear on over to the coast, south to Gaza. Whenever the people would plant their crops, at harvest time here would come all these people and just rip them off. They would, you know, you got your wheat harvested then they'd just come in and just rip them off from all their wheat and barley and all of their harvest, and then next year back again, harvest time.

And so they took away all the sustenance of these people and a tremendous multitude of them. The people finally cried unto the Lord and the Lord answered with a prophet who told them the reason for their dilemma was the fact that they had forsaken God who had given them deliverance out of Egypt and had brought them into the land.

So, there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak tree which is at Ophrah, that pertained to Joash the Abiezrite: [and the son] and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites (Jdg 6:11).

So here was Gideon hiding from the Midianites as he was threshing the wheat because if the Midianites had caught him they'd take the wheat. And so he was out by the winepress threshing wheat and here was an angel sitting under an oak tree.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with you, you very brave man. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my LORD, if the LORD is with us, why is all of this calamity befallen us? Where are all of the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? Now the LORD has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have I not sent thee? And he said, Oh my Lord, how shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house (Jdg 6:12-15).

Now as I was mentioning this morning, God often times has trouble getting people to respond to his call. God calls us; that's the beginning of it. As soon as I respond to the call of God then God lays out what He wants me to do and then I resign "Lord, I can't do that. How in the world can I do that, Lord?"

God called Moses and said, "Go in and stand before Pharaoh, tell him, Let my people go." "Lord, how can I go before Pharaoh? I'm not eloquent in speech." The Lord said to Jeremiah, "I have called thee to stand before kings" "Lord, how can I stand before kings? I'm young, no one's gonna listen to me." God said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might, and deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites" "Lord, how can I deliver. I'm—my family's nothing. I'm the least of my father's household. You've got the wrong man. Better check your address papers. Not me."

The LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee (Jdg 6:16),

There's the key of any successful service for God: "I will be with thee." Now, it's an interesting thing that many times we endeavor to do a work for God not directed by God. And this is why we so often get just overwhelmed when God tells us what He wants us to do because we've already tried to do so many things on our own hook and utterly fail. So the Lord comes along and tells us to do just the thing we've been trying to do and failed. We say, "Lord, I can't do that. I've tried to do that." But God gave to Gideon the key of success, "I will be with thee." That's the key of success, the Lord working with us, learning to work together with the Lord.

The disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. And in the morning Jesus stood on the shore and He said, "Children do you have any meat?" And they said no. And he said, "Cast your nets on the other side." And when they did immediately the nets were full of fish. They began to draw them in until the boats began to sink with the multitude of fish.

You see, there's a difference between just serving and serving at the direction of the Lord. When the Lord is in it, He can fill the nets. When the Lord is in it, He can make it prosperous. You can do the same thing in the same way and apart from the Lord. You're gonna pull up empty nets all night. But as soon as the Lord joins with you, it makes the difference between the nets being empty and the nets being full. The key and the secret to all successful Christian service is in this verse, "I will be with thee," to recognize my total need of the Lord being with me. To recognize I can't do it myself and to depend upon that presence of the Lord with me in all that I endeavor to do for Him.

"How can I deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Midianites? Lord, my dad is nothing and I'm the least of my father's household."

"I will be with thee" the Lord answered.

And thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And so Gideon said, Look if I've found grace in your sight, then show me a sign that you've talked with me (Jdg 6:16-17).

He thought, man, I'm dreaming. This is wild. If you really chose me than give me some kind of a sign, Lord. I need a sign. Now Gideon was the kind of guy who was careful and he wanted to make sure. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think that God respects honest doubt. I think there is a dishonest doubt that no one respects. There are some people who come up with a question and just the way they ask the question you know they don't want an answer, they just want an argument. They're not ready to listen to the answer when they hear it. There are other people who come up and the question is genuinely sincere, they are searching for an answer. Those kinds of questions are worth answering. The other kind I have no time for.

God is concerned with honest doubt. If you really are honest in your doubt, God respects that and God will confirm His word to your heart. "Lord, are you really speaking to me to do this?" And it is wise to make sure it's God speaking. A lot of people have gone off on half-cocked ideas because they had some feeling or some vision or premonition and they've gotten into all kinds of miserable situations because they really didn't search out to see if it was really God speaking. Now if you've got some wild task that you feel God is calling you to make sure God has spoken to you. Don't just go out and put your house up for sale, for sale and take off with—unless you're really sure that God has spoken to you. Make certain of that.

And Gideon wanted to make certain, "Show me a sign that you really have talked to me." He said, "Wait here, wait here. I want to go fix you something. Will you wait here until I get back?" He said, "I'll wait here until you get back."

So Gideon went into the house, and there he made ready a little goat, some unleavened cakes, a bushel of flour: he put the flesh in a basket, put the broth in a pot, and he brought it to the angel under the oak tree, and presented it to him. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them on the rock, and pour out the broth. And so he did so. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord disappeared out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that it was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! Because I've seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace [Shalom]; fear not: thou shalt not die. So Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and he called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah this altar that Gideon built (Jdg 6:19-24).

Now, it is interesting, he called it Jehovah-shalom. He's about ready to go into one of the biggest battles of his entire life, I mean he is facing warfare and an enemy and conflict, God has called him to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression of Midianites but he calls the altar Jehovah-shalom, "God our peace." For he is looking beyond the battle to the peace that God is going to bring. And so by faith really, the altar is named Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord our peace" because he's looking beyond the conflict to the peace that God has promised to His people. It's really very beautiful. And we too can look beyond the conflict to the peace that God has promised. And maybe you're in conflict and turmoil tonight but He is still to you Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord your peace" and He can give you peace even in the midst of the conflict. Jehovah-shalom. One of the beautiful compound names of Jehovah.

And so it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Now take your father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto Jehovah thy God upon the top of the rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer it as a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down (Jdg 6:25-26).

Now, Gideon's dad was an idolater. Gideon's dad had his own place of worship, a grove with the altar of Baal or an idol of Baal there where they worshipped in the grove. And so God says "Now take a second bullock, make another altar, cut down the grove that your father has his place of worship. Throw down the altar of Baal, build an altar unto God and offer the second bullock using the wood of this grove as the fire and all."

And so Gideon took ten men his servants, and he did as the LORD said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it at day time, so he did it by night. And when the men of the city rose up early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said to one another, Who did it? And they inquired and asked, and they said, Gideon the son of Joash did it. And so the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son, that he may die: because he has cast down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will you plead for Baal? will you save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning: if he is a god, [let him plead] plead for himself, because one has cast down his altar (Jdg 6:28-31).

Now, here the men of Israel are actually gonna do Gideon in because he threw down a pagan god. Joash, when they said you know, "Send your son out. We're gonna kill him. He knocked down the altar of Baal." And he said, "Are you pleading for Baal? For a pagan deity? Truly the men who are pleading for him ought to be the one that are put to death. If he's a god let him defend himself. You don't have to defend god." Now, how many times we find ourselves in the awkward position of trying to defend God against the attacks of His enemies, trying to prove the existence of God, trying to defend God? God is able to defend Himself, perfectly, complete. I don't have to defend God. God is able, quite well.

So, they called Gideon from there on Jerubbaal, which means "let Baal plead for himself."

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and they went over, and they pitched in the valley of Jezreel. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all of Manasseh; who also gathered after him: and to Asher, and to Zebulun, and to Naphtali; and they came to meet him (Jdg 6:33-35).

These are all of them tribes in the northern part of the land. South of Manasseh was Ephraim, Benjamin, Judah and Simeon; they were not brought into this battle, nor were the tribes on the other side. But these tribes that were around the area of Megiddo, Jezreel is the same valley of Megiddo is also known as Jezreel. This is where the Midianites had encamped, some a hundred and thirty-two thousand of them.

And Gideon said unto God, If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said (Jdg 6:36).

Now again, Gideon is still questioning his call of God, wants to make sure. So tell you what, I'm gonna put a fleece wool out on the ground tonight and in the morning let the ground be dry and the fleece wet. Then I'll know. In the morning when Gideon woke up he wrung a cup of water out of the fleece and the ground was dry.

And he thought, "Well, maybe that was just, who knows maybe fleece gathers moisture at night when the ground doesn't. "Lord, let's reverse the process just to make sure. Tonight, I'm gonna put the same fleece out there on the ground. Let the ground be all wet with dew, let the fleece be dry." So in the morning he came out again and so the ground was all wet with dew, the fleece was dry and so he figured that it was the Lord.

Now, because of this there are many people who seek to discern the voice of God by offering some kind of a fleece before the Lord. And so you've heard of a person offering a fleece before God. "Lord, if they call by ten o'clock tomorrow morning then I'll know" you know, and you set up some kind of a fleece before God, some kind of a condition for God to meet so that you'll know that it's really God speaking to your heart.

I really don't know about fleeces today. I don't know how valid they are for us as the children of the Lord to seek to ascertain the will of God by a fleece. In the period of the Old Testament there were many methods by which they sought to ascertain the will of God. One of them was by casting of lots.

And even carried over into the New Testament when Judas Iscariot died, Peter said to the disciples, "We've gotta get someone else to take his place and so let's cast lots to see which one God has chosen. Whether it be Barnabas or Matthias." And so the disciples cast lots to ascertain the will of God. But all of this was prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church we do not read of anywhere where they cast lots or where they used fleeces to ascertain the will of God. But it seemed that once the Holy Spirit had begun to direct the activities of the church, there was a greater certainty in the ascertaining of the will of God just by the direct leading of the Holy Spirit.

So Paul said, "And it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us. We were determined to go to Asia but the Holy Spirit forbade us. The Holy Spirit said separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work that I have called them to do."

And the Holy Spirit was directing in such a positive way there seemed to be no need of setting up a condition for God to fulfill for them to ascertain or there was no need of casting lots or trying to discern the will of God in some type of an ambiguous way.

Paul, after fourteen days on that ship driven in the storm on the Mediterranean, stood up and said, "Men and brethren, be of good cheer. Last night an angel of the Lord stood by me and told me that though the ship was gonna be wrecked there would be no loss of life." And the angel of the Lord directed Paul. It wasn't a fleece kind of a thing, it was a lot.

So I don't about fleeces today. I know that some people set out, you know, conditions for God to fill and that I suppose is all right. But I just don't know about them. I personally don't try to fleece God. I'm just not certain about that practice. Though it was done in the Old Testament, I'm not really certain about it today. But each person, I guess, to his own. Whatever method that you have devised to really discern. The way I feel, if it works great. You know, whatever you've got as long as it works, that's tremendous. And people, we all relate to God in our own individual styles. God doesn't really, you know, follow patterns. You can't really set God into a pattern. And I sort of like it that you can't. I like the diversities with which God deals with people's lives because we're so diverse from each other.

And so Gideon used his fleece to ascertain the will of God. I don't know if you would set out a piece of wool tonight. I would think in the morning that the wool and the ground would all be wet. Then whatta you do? You pray.

(Through The Bible C-2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

THE REALITY OF PRAYER: by Edward M. Bounds

I. PRAYER—A PRIVILEGE, PRINCELY, SACRED

"I am the creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! Lord, is it not Thy word—'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God? Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, if any be willing to do Thy will he shall know. I am willing to do; let me know Thy will.'"—John Wesley

The word "Prayer" expresses the largest and most comprehensive approach unto God. It gives prominence to the element of devotion. It is communion and intercourse with God. It is enjoyment of God. It is access to God. "Supplication" is a more restricted and more intense form of prayer, accompanied by a sense of personal need, limited to the seeking in an urgent manner of a supply for pressing need.

"Supplication" is the very soul of prayer in the way of pleading for some one thing, greatly needed, and the need intensely felt.

"Intercession" is an enlargement in prayer, a going out in broadness and fullness from self to others. Primarily, it does not centre in praying for others, but refers to the freeness, boldness and childlike confidence of the praying. It is the fullness of confiding influence in

the soul's approach to God, unlimited and unhesitating in its access and its demands. This influence and confident trust is to be used for others.

Prayer always, and everywhere is an immediate and confiding approach to, and a request of, God the Father. In the prayer universal and perfect, as the pattern of all praying, it is "Our Father, Who art in Heaven." At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father." In His sacerdotal prayer, Jesus lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, "Father." Personal, familiar and paternal was all His praying. Strong, true and touching and tearful, was His praying. Read these words of Paul: "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" (Hebrews 5:7).

So elsewhere (James 1:5) we have "asking" set forth as prayer: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

"Asking of God" and "receiving" from the Lord—direct application to God, immediate connection with God—that is prayer.

In John 5:13 we have this statement about prayer:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

In Phil. 4:6 we have these words about prayer: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

What is God's will about prayer? First of all, it is God's will that we pray. Jesus Christ "spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint"

Paul writes to young Timothy about the first things which God's people are to do, and first among the first he puts prayer: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

In connection with these words Paul declares that the will of God and the redemption and mediation of Jesus Christ for the salvation for all men are all vitally concerned in this matter of prayer. In this his apostolical authority and solicitude of soul conspire with God's will and Christ's intercession to will that "the men pray everywhere."

Note how frequently prayer is brought forward in the New Testament: "Continuing instant in prayer"; "Pray without ceasing"; "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving"; "Be ye sober and watch unto prayer"; Christ's clarion call was "watch and pray." What are all these and others, if it is not the will of God that men should pray?

Prayer is complement, make efficient and cooperate with God's will, whose sovereign sway is to run parallel in extent and power with the atonement of Jesus Christ. He, through the Eternal Spirit, by the grace of God, "tasted death for every man." We, through the Eternal Spirit, by the grace of God, pray for every man.

But how do I know that I am praying by the will of God? Every true attempt to pray is in response to the will of God. Bungling it may be and untutored by human teachers, but it is acceptable to God, because it is in obedience to His will. If I will give myself up to the inspiration of the Spirit of God, who commands me to pray, the details and the petitions of that praying will all fall into harmony with the will of Him who wills that I should pray.

Prayer is no little thing, no selfish and small matter. It does not concern the petty interests of one person. The littlest prayer broadens out by the will of God till it touches all words, conserves all interests, and enhances man's greatest wealth, and God's greatest good. God is so concerned that men pray that He has promised to answer prayer. He has not promised to do something general if we pray, but He has promised to do the very thing for which we pray.

Prayer, as taught by Jesus in its essential features, enters into all the relations of life. It sanctifies brotherliness. To the Jew, the altar was the symbol and place of prayer. The Jew devoted the altar to the worship of God. Jesus Christ takes the altar of prayer and devotes it to the worship of the brotherhood. How Christ purifies the altar and enlarges it! How He takes it out of the sphere of a mere performance, and makes its virtue to consist, not in the mere act of praying, but in the spirit which actuates us toward men. Our spirit toward folks is of the life of prayer. We must be at peace with men, and, if possible, have them at peace with us, before we can be at peace with God. Reconciliation with men is the forerunner of reconciliation with God. Our spirit and words must embrace men before they can embrace God. Unity with the brotherhood goes before unity with God. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way. First, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23).

Non-praying is lawlessness, discord, anarchy. Prayer, in the moral government of God, is as strong and far-reaching as the law of gravitation in the material world, and it is as necessary as gravitation to hold things in their proper sphere and in life. The space occupied by prayer in the Sermon on the Mount bespeaks its estimate by Christ and the importance it holds in His system. Many important principles are discussed in a verse or two. The Sermon consists of one hundred and eleven verses, and eighteen are about prayer directly, and others indirectly.

Prayer was one of the cardinal principles of piety in every dispensation and to every child of God. It did not pertain to the business of Christ to originate duties, but to recover, to recast, to spiritualise, and to reinforce those duties which are cardinal and original.

With Moses the great features of prayer are prominent. He never beats the air nor fights a sham battle. The most serious and strenuous business of his serious and strenuous life was prayer. He is much at it with the intensest earnestness of his soul. Intimate as he was with God, his intimacy did not abate the necessity of prayer. This intimacy only brought clearer insight into the nature and necessity of prayer, and led him to see the greater obligations to pray, and to discover the larger results of praying. In reviewing one of the crises through which Israel passed, when the very existence of the nation was imperilled, he writes: "I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights." Wonderful praying and wonderful results! Moses knew how to do wonderful praying, and God knew how to give wonderful results.

The whole force of Bible statement is to increase our faith in the doctrine that prayer affects God, secures favors from God, which can be secured in no other way, and which will not be bestowed by God if we do not pray. The whole canon of Bible teaching is to illustrate the great truth that God hears and answers prayer. One of the great purposes of God in His book is to impress upon us indelibly the great importance, the priceless value, and the absolute necessity of asking God for the things which we need for time and eternity. He urges us by every consideration, and presses and warns us by every interest. He points us to His own Son, turned over to us for our good, as His pledge that prayer will be answered, teaching us that God is our Father, able to do all things for us and to give all things to us, much more than earthly parents are able or willing to do for their children.

Let us thoroughly understand ourselves and understand, also, this great business of prayer. Our one great business is prayer, and we will never do it well without we fasten to it by all binding force. We will never do it well without arranging the best conditions of doing it well. Satan has suffered so much by good praying that all his wily, shrewd and ensnaring devices will be used to cripple its performances.

We must, by all the fastenings we can find, cable ourselves to prayer. To be loose in time and place is to open the door to Satan. To be exact, prompt, unswerving, and careful in even the little things, is to buttress ourselves against the Evil One.

Prayer, by God's very oath, is put in the very stones of God's foundations, as eternal as its companion, "And men shall pray for him continually." This is the eternal condition which advances His cause, and makes it powerfully aggressive. Men are to always pray for it. Its strength, beauty and aggression lie in their prayers. Its power lies simply in its power to pray. No power is found elsewhere but in its ability to pray. "For my house shall be called the house of prayer for all people." It is based on prayer, and carried on by the same means.

Prayer is a privilege, a sacred, princely privilege. Prayer is a duty, an obligation most binding, and most imperative, which should hold us to it. But prayer is more than a privilege, more than a duty. It is a means, an instrument, a condition. Not to pray is to lose much more than to fail in the exercise and enjoyment of a high, or sweet privilege. Not to pray is to fail along lines far more important than even the violation of an obligation.

Prayer is the appointed condition of getting God's aid. This aid is as manifold and illimitable as God's ability, and as varied and exhaustless is this aid as man's need. Prayer is the avenue through which God supplies man's wants. Prayer is the channel through which all good flows from God to man, and all good from men to men. God is the Christian's father. Asking and giving are in that relation.

Man is the one more immediately concerned in this great work of praying. It ennobles man's reason to employ it in prayer. The office and work of prayer is the divinest engagement of man's reason. Prayer makes man's reason to shine. Intelligence of the highest order approves prayer. He is the wisest man who prays the most and the best. Prayer is the school of wisdom as well as of piety.

Prayer is not a picture to handle, to admire, to look at. It is not beauty, coloring, shape, attitude, imagination, or genius. These things do not pertain to its character or conduct. It is not poetry nor music. Its inspiration and melody come from Heaven. Prayer belongs to the spirit, and at times it possesses the spirit and stirs the spirit with high and holy purposes and resolves.

("The Reality Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 1 ; 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.)

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 379-381)

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