



PRAYER THAT MOVES GOD

by Greg Gordon

OH, brethren, the highest form of worship and speech is prayer. We need to see praying that is bold, that is strong. Praying that moves God is prayer that moves us. If we are not moved by our prayers how do we expect them to move God?

Our Master here on earth had “strong crying and tears” – should we not have praying that is anything less? Oh for a resurrection of fervent praying, praying that is “owned by God.” Loud crying! Lamenting with tears. Gethsemane prayer, agonising prayer is needed in our lukewarm laid-back Christianity today.

Adam Clarke the Methodist commentator said: “Prayer requires more of the heart than the tongue.” May we not be found lacking in fervent strong heart-crying to our Lord. The prophet Isaiah speaks the word of the Lord to Hezekiah and may it be to us also spoken: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears.”

E.M. Bounds speaks of men who moved God by their prayers: “Mr Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: ‘He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have

seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.”

John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. “I would not rise from my seat,” he said, “without lifting my heart to God.” His greeting to a friend was always: “Do I meet you praying?”

Luther said: “If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.” He had a motto: “He that has prayed well has studied well.”

Bounds continues to recount more lives made sublime through the ministry of prayer: “Archbishop Leighton was so much alone with God that he seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. ‘Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure,’ says his biographer.”

Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o’clock for his business of praying till eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim: “O how this shames me! Does

not my Master deserve more than theirs?”

One of the holiest and among the most gifted of Scottish preachers said: “I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession.” This was the praying plan of Robert McCheyne.

The memorable Methodist band in their praying shame us: “From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer.”

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scottish preacher, thought the day ill spent if he did not spend eight or 10 hours in prayer. He kept a plaid that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground weeping. He would reply: “Oh woman, I have the souls of 3 000

to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!”

Bounds shares more testimonies of men who prayed: “Sir Henry Havelock always spent the first two hours of each day alone with God. If the encampment was struck at 6 am, he would rise at four. Dr Judson’s success in prayer is attributable to the fact that he gave much time to prayer. He says on this point: ‘Arrange your affairs, if possible, so that you can leisurely devote two or three hours every day not merely to devotional exercises but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God. Endeavour seven times a day to withdraw from business and company and lift up your soul to God in private retirement. Begin the day by rising after midnight and devoting some time amid the silence and darkness of the night to this sacred work. Let the hour of opening dawn find you at the same work. Let the hours of 9, 12, 3, 6, and 9 at night witness the same. Be resolute in his cause. Make all practicable sacrifices to maintain it. Consider that your time is short, and that business and company must not be allowed to rob you of your God.’”

RED-HOT WITH PRAYER

Impossible, say we, fanatical directions! Dr Judson impressed an empire for Christ and laid the foundations of God’s kingdom with imperishable granite in the heart of Burma. He was successful, one of the few men who mightily impressed the world for Christ. Many men of greater gifts and genius and learning than he have made no such impression; their religious work is like footsteps in the sands, but he has engraved his work on the adamant. The secret of its profundity and endurance is found in the fact that he gave time to prayer. He kept the iron red-hot with prayer, and God’s skill fashioned it with enduring power.

No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer, and no man can be a man of prayer who does not give much time to praying.

Does it convict you to read all these accounts? Oh! May we be found in this list of men that knew their God and did strong exploits.

Leonard Ravenhill told a story of a pretty little business woman many years ago: “The Lord is really working on me, I can hardly sleep after 4 o’clock, I am up every morning be-

tween 4 and 5. And I have long periods where I cannot utter a word. All I can do is sob and grieve over a nation that is so rotten and a church that is so sterile.”

David Legge recounts the story of John Hyde of India: “I read recently the biography of ‘Praying Hyde.’ Some of you may have heard this story before. Praying Hyde was on the mission field and he stayed on the mission field until he could do no more, through health. He was sent back home and he was sent to the doctors. The doctor examined him, sent him away, and then he came back to get the results of what was wrong with him. The doctor sat him down and he said, ‘Mr Hyde, do you have any pains in your chest?’ He said ‘Yes I do.’ He said, ‘Mr Hyde, your heart has displaced itself, Your heart ought to be here, but it has moved over in the cavity of your chest, and that can only happen through one thing, AGONY!”

“He was called the apostle of prayer and his prayers led to thousands being taken into the kingdom of God, into the church of Jesus Christ in the land of India. But he was a man who travailed. He was a man who lost his health for God.”

Are you willing to hear the voice of God and share the burden of God? This type of praying is for those that have not counted their life’s dear to them.

Charles Finney shares some accounts of prayer in his sermon *Prevailing Prayer*: “The apostle Paul speaks of it as a travail of the soul. Jesus Christ, when he was praying in the garden, was in such an agony, that he sweated, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. I have never known a person sweat blood; but I have known a person pray till the blood started from the nose. And I have known people pray till they were all wet with perspiration, in the coldest weather in winter. I have known people pray for hours, till their strength was all exhausted with the agony of their minds. Such prayers prevailed with God. If you mean to pray effectually, you must pray a great deal.”

Leonard Ravenhill, speaking of men who prayed on their knees, said: “America has produced some of the greatest prayer warriors in the world. John Hyde was one of them. I knew someone who had prayed with him, and they said it was just awesome when

this man went into prayer. Edward Payson, better known as Praying Payson of Portland, was another great prayer warrior. He used to kneel at the side of his bed and pray and pray and pray. When they washed his body for burial, they found great big pads on his knees like a camel has. Tradition says that the apostle James had camel’s knees but it’s a living fact that Payson had them. That’s because he used to pray at the side of his bed with energy – and he wore two grooves about six or seven inches long into that hard floor where he used to pray and make intercession.”

HE ALMOST LIVED ON HIS KNEES

David Brainerd in his diary stated: “I got up this morning and the Indians were still committing adultery and drinking and beating their tom-toms and shouting like hell itself. I prayed from a half hour after sunrise to a half hour before sunset. There was nowhere to pray in the Indian camp. I went into the woods and knelt in the snow. It was up to my chin. I wrestled in prayer until a half hour before sunset, and I could only touch the snow with the tips of my fingers. The heat of my body had melted the snow.” What amazing intercessory prayer!

William Bramwell is famous in Methodist annals for personal holiness and for his wonderful success in preaching and for the marvellous answers to his prayers. For hours at a time he would pray. He almost lived on his knees. He went over his circuits like a flame of fire. The fire was kindled by the time he spent in prayer. He often spent as much as four hours in a single season of prayer.

David Legge speaks of the modern Christian mind: “Do you know what the cry is today? A ‘save-yourself Christianity.’ Whatever you do, don’t harm yourself. Be careful. Watch you don’t overdo it. Don’t become too fanatical.”

Ravenhill said: “If you are going to get mature in God all the dwarfs around you will criticise and sneer at you and say ‘You’re trying to be holier than the rest of us. Ah, but remember this – the men who have been used most by God have had the greatest devotional lives.”

May we be found much on our knees and much in prayer. Prayer that moves God. Heaven weeps for it. Eternity demands it. Hell is crying out for it. ☩