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Articles and Sermons :: PRAYER (1982) last days newsletter. -ravenhill

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PRAYER

The Last Days
Newsletter/June 1982
By Leonard Ravenhill

THE GOSPEL OF PRAYER

There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer. People often say, "Why do you insist on prayer so much?" The answer is very simple - because Jesus did. You could change the title of the Gospel according to St. Luke to the Gospel of Prayer. It's the prayer life of Jesus. The other evangelists say that Jesus was in the Jordan and the Spirit descended on Him as a dove-Luke says it was while He was praying that the Spirit descended on Him. The other evangelists say that Jesus chose 12 disciples - Luke says it was after He spent a night in prayer that He chose 12 disciples. The other evangelists say that Jesus died on a cross-Luke says that even when He was dying Jesus was praying for those who persecuted Him. The other evangelists say Jesus went on a mount and He was transfigured-Luke says it was while He was praying that He was transfigured. There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer. The scriptures say that the disciples went to bed, but Jesus went to pray as was the custom. It was His custom to pray. Now Jesus was the Son of God-He was definitely anointed for his ministry. If Jesus needed all that time in prayer, don't you and I need time in prayer? If Jesus needed it in every crisis, don't you and I need it in every crisis? The story goes that a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village saw an old man sitting by a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one of the visitors asked, "Were any great men born in this village?" Without looking up the old man replied, "No, only babies." The greatest men were once babies. The greatest saints were once toddlers in the things of the Spirit. C. H. Spurgeon was converted at the age of 14. When he was 19 they built him a tabernacle seating 5,000 which he packed twice a day-that's 10,000. How? He waited on God. He got alone with God. He studied...and he prayed.

DESPERATE PRAYER

God makes all His best people in loneliness. Do you know what the secret of praying is? Praying in secret. "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door... "(Matt. 6:6) You can't show off when the door's shut and nobody's there. You can't display your gifts. You can impress others, but you can't impress God. I Samuel 1:1-15 gives an account of the yearly trip Elkanah and his wife, Hannah, made to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. During this time, Hannah had been distressed that she was not able to bear a son for her husband. This passage of Scripture gives quite a descriptive account of her time in prayer concerning the barrenness of her womb. It says that Hannah wept. More than this, she wept until she was sore. She poured out her soul before the Lord. Her heart was grieving; she was bitter of soul, provoked, and of a sorrowful spirit. Now that's a pretty good list of affilictions - sorrow, hardship and everything else that came upon this woman. But the key to the

whole situation is that she was a praying woman. In verse 20 it says that she reaped her reward. "Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord." Now I say very often-and people don't like it - that God doesn't answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer! Your prayer life denotes how much dependability you have on your own ability, and how much you really believe in your heart when you sing, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling ..." The more self - confidence you have, the less you pray. The less self - confidence you have, the more you have to pray. What does the Scripture say? It says that God takes the lowly, the things that are not. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:28 that God takes the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no flesh should glory in His presence. We need a bunch of "are nots" today.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE POOR

Prayer is the language of the poor. Over and over again David, the King of Israel, says, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy." (Psalm 86:1)

And do you remember that one of the greatest psalms he wrote says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him..." (Psalm 34:6) The apostle Paul overwhelms me with his spirituality, his pedigree, his colossal intellect. Yet he says that he's very conscious that when he's weak, he is strong. He was always trying to prove to himself and to others that he was a nobody. True prayer is a two-way communication. I speak to God and God speaks to me. I don't know how the Spirit makes communication-or why God needs me to pray - but that's how God works.

"GET UP AND PRAY!"

One day I was at a confererence with Dr. Raymond Edmond of Wheaton College, one of the greatest Christian educators in this country. He told us of an experience he had while he was in Uruguay as a missionary. He hadn't been there long before he was sick and dying. He was so near death that they had already dug his grave. He had great beads of sweat on his brow and there was a death rattle in his throat. But suddenly he sat straight up in bed and said to his wife, "Bring me my clothes!" Nobody knew what had happened. Many years later he was retelling the story in Boston. Afterward, a little old lady with a small dog-eared, beaten-up book, approached him and asked, "What day did you say you were dying? What time was it in Uruguay? What time would it be in Boston?" When he answered her, her wrinkled face lit up. Pointing to her book, she said,"There it is, you see? At 2 a.m. God said get up and pray-the devil's trying to kill Raymond Edmond in Uruguay." And she'd gotten up and prayed. Duncan Campbell told the story of hearing a farmer in his field who was praying. He was praying about Greece. Afterward, he asked him why he was praying. The man said, "I don't know. I had a burden in the spirit and God said,'You pray, there's someone in Greece that is in a bad situation.' I prayed until I got a release." Two or three years later the farmer was in a meeting listening to a missionary. The man described a time when he was working in Greece. He had been in serious trouble. The time? Two or three years ago. The men compared notes and discovered that it was the very same day that God had burdened a farmer, on a little island off the coast of Scotland, to pray for a man in Greece whose name he didn't even know. It may seem the Lord gives you strange things. I don't care. If the Lord tells you something, carry on

with what the Lord tells you. "WHO SHALL ASCEND TO THE HILL OF THE LORD?" There's another experience Duncan Campbell told about when he was working in Scotland. "I couldn't preach," he said. "I couldn't get through to God. The heavens were solid. It was as though there was a 10 ft. ceiling of steel." So he quit trying to preach. He asked a young man named John Cameron to pray. The boy stood up and said, "What's the use of praying if we're not right right with God? He quoted the 24th Psalm, "Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord?" You can't approach God unless your hands are clean, which means your relationships with others are clean and your heart is clean. "Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart ..." (Psalm 24:3-4) After the boy recited Psalm 24 he began to pray. He prayed 10, 15, 20 minutes. Then he suddenly said, "Excuse me, Lord, while I resist the devil." He turned around and began to tell the devil where to go and how to get there. He fought for all he was worth. You talk about having on the armor of God and resisting the devil! When he finished resisting the devil, he finished his prayer. He prayed for 45 minutes! When he finished praying it was just as though God had pulled a little switch in heaven. The Spirit of God came down on that church, that community, on the dance hall at the other end of town and the tavern on this end of town. Revival was born in that prayer! At the end of Malachi it says, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly (that's the word I like, suddenly) come to his temple." (Mal. 3:1) Remember a bunch of men that had been waiting in the upper room? Suddenly the Holy Spirit came on them in that room. There's a date in history that I love very much. It was Wednesday, August 13,1737. A little group of people in Moravia were waiting in a prayer meeting. At 11:00 suddenly the Holy Spirit came. Do you know what happened? The prayer meeting that began at 11:00 lasted 100 years! That's right. That prayer room was not empty for a century! It's the longest prayer among men and women that I know of. Even children six and seven years old travailed in prayer for countries the name of which they couldn't even spell. WHY WE DON'T HAVE REVIVAL In an old town in Ireland they'll show you with reverence a place where four young men met night after night after night praying for revival. In Wales, there's a place in the hills where three or four young men only 18 or 19 years old met and prayed night after night. They wouldn't let God go; they would not take no for an answer. As far as humanly possible they prayed a revival into birth. If you're thinking of revival at your church without any inconvenience, forget it. Revival costs a lot. I can give you one simple reason why we don't have revival in America. Because we're content to live without it. We're not seeking God-we're seeking miracles, we're seeking big crusades, we're seeking blessings. In Numbers 11, Moses said to God, "You're asking me to carry a burden I can't handle. Do something or kill me!" Do you think it's time we changed Patrick Henry's prayer from, Give me liberty or give me death," to "Give me revival or let me die"? In the 30th chapter of Genesis, Rachael goes to Jacob and throws herself down in despair. She says, "Give me children or I die." Are you willing to throw yourself down before God to seek the spiritual birth of spiritual children in our country? People say, "I'm filled with the Holy Spirit." If the coming of the Spirit didn't revolutionize your prayer life, you'd better check on it. I'm not so sure you got what God wanted you get. We've said that prayer changes things. No! Prayer doesn't change things. Prayer changes people and they change things. We all want Gabriel to do the job. God says do it yourself-with My sufficiency and My strength. We need to get like this woman, Hannah. What did she do? she wept, she was grieved, she said she had a complaint, she fasted-and she prayed. Jesus, the anointed of God, made prayer His custom. Paul, with his background and intellect, depended on prayer because he said he was weak. David, the king, called himself a poor man and cried to the lord. Hannah prayed for a

son and gave birth to a prophet. The prayers of a handful of young men sparked revival. There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.