

Twenty-Third Lesson. 'Bear Fruit, That the Father May Give What Ye Ask;' Or, Obedience the Path to Power in Prayer

by Andrew Murray

Obedience is the path to prevailing prayer and the key to unlocking the unlimited blessings of Christ's wonderful prayer-promises.

Topics: "Obedience", "Power Of Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the vital connection between obedience and the power of prayer, illustrating that true discipleship involves bearing fruit as a reflection of our relationship with Christ. He explains that it is through our obedience to God's commandments that we gain access to the Father's promises and the ability to ask in Jesus' name. Murray reassures believers that the path to effective prayer is rooted in a life dedicated to serving and glorifying God, rather than seeking personal comfort or blessings. He encourages Christians to embrace their calling to bear fruit, which in turn strengthens their faith and prayer life. Ultimately, Murray calls for a complete surrender to God's will as the foundation for a fruitful and powerful prayer life.

Transcript

'Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He may give it you.'--John xv. 16.

'The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'--James. v. 16.

THE promise of the Father's giving whatsoever we ask is here once again renewed, in such a connection as to show us to whom it is that such wonderful influence in the council chamber of the Most High is to be granted. 'I chose you,' the Master says, 'and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide;' and then He adds, to the end 'that whatsoever ye,' the fruit-bearing ones, 'shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.' This is nothing but the fuller expression of what He had spoken in the words, 'If ye abide in me.' He had spoken of the object of this abiding as the bearing 'fruit,' 'more fruit,' 'much fruit,' in this was God to be glorified, and the mark of discipleship seen. No wonder that He now adds, that where the reality of the abiding is seen in fruit abounding and abiding, this would be the qualification for praying so as to obtain what we ask. Entire consecration to the fulfilment of our calling is

the condition of effectual prayer, is the key to the unlimited blessings of Christ's wonderful prayer-promises.

There are Christians who fear that such a statement is at variance with the doctrine of free grace. But surely not of free grace rightly understood, nor with so many express statements of God's blessed word. Take the words of St. John (1 John iii. 22): 'Let us love in deed and truth; hereby shall we assure our heart before Him. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.' Or take the oft-quoted words of James: 'The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' that is, of a man of whom, according to the definition of the Holy Spirit, it can be said, 'He that doeth righteousness, is righteous even as He is righteous.' Mark the spirit of so many of the Psalms, with their confident appeal to the integrity and righteousness of the suppliant. In Ps. xviii, David says: 'The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me. . . . I was upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity: therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness.' (Ps. xviii. 20-26. See also Ps. vii. 3-5, xv. 1, 2, xviii. 3, 6, xxvi. 1-6, cxix. 121, 153.) If we carefully consider such utterances in the light of the New Testament, we shall find them in perfect harmony with the explicit teaching of the Saviour's parting words: 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;' 'Ye are my friends if ye do what I command you.' The word is indeed meant literally: 'I appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, that,' then, 'whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.'

Let us seek to enter into the spirit of what the Saviour here teaches us. There is a danger in our evangelical religion of looking too much at what it offers from one side, as a certain experience to be obtained in prayer and faith. There is another side which God's word puts very strongly, that of obedience as the only path to blessing. What we need is to realize that in our relationship to the Infinite Being whom we call God who has created and redeemed us, the first sentiment that ought to animate us is that of subjection: the surrender to His supremacy, His glory, His will, His pleasure, ought to be the first and uppermost thought of our life. The question is not, how we are to obtain and enjoy His favour, for in this the main thing may still be self. But what this Being in the very nature of things rightfully claims, and is infinitely and unspeakably worthy of, is that His glory and pleasure should be my one object. Surrender to His perfect and blessed will, a life of service and obedience, is the beauty and the charm of heaven. Service and obedience, these were the thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of the Son, when He dwelt upon earth. Service and obedience, these must become with us the chief objects of desire and aim, more so than rest or light, or joy or strength: in them we shall find the path to all the higher blessedness that awaits us.

Just note what a prominent place the Master gives it, not only in the 15th chapter, in connection with the abiding, but in the 14th, where He speaks of the indwelling of the Three-One God. In verse 15 we have it: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments, and the Spirit will be given you of the Father. Then verse 21: 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' and he shall have the special love of my Father resting on him and the special manifestation of myself. And then again, verse 23, one of the highest of all the exceeding great and precious promises: 'If a man love me he will keep my words, and the Father and I will come and take up our abode with him.' Could words put it more clearly that obedience is the way to the indwelling of the Spirit, to His revealing the Son within us, and to His again preparing us to be the abode, the home of the Father? The indwelling of the Three-One God is the heritage of them that obey. Obedience and faith are but two aspects of one act,--surrender to God and His will. As faith strengthens for obedience, it is in turn strengthened by it: faith is made perfect by works. It is to be feared

that often our efforts to believe have been unavailing because we have not taken up the only position in which a large faith is legitimate or possible,--that of entire surrender to the honour and the will of God. It is the man who is entirely consecrated to God and His will who will find the power come to claim everything that His God has promised to be for him.

The application of this in the school of prayer is very simple, but very solemn. 'I chose you,' the Master says, 'and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit,' much fruit (verses 5, 8), 'and that your fruit should abide,' that your life might be one of abiding fruit and abiding fruitfulness, 'that' thus, as fruitful branches abiding in me, 'whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.' O how often we have sought to be able to pray the effectual prayer for much grace to bear fruit, and have wondered that the answer came not. It was because we were reversing the Master's order. We wanted to have the comfort and the joy and the strength first, that we might do the work easily and without any feeling of difficulty or self-sacrifice. And He wanted us in faith, without asking whether we felt weak or strong, whether the work was hard or easy, in the obedience of faith to do what He said: the path of fruit-bearing would have led us to the place and the power of prevailing prayer. Obedience is the only path that leads to the glory of God. Not obedience instead of faith, nor obedience to supply the shortcomings of faith; no, but faith's obedience gives access to all the blessings our God has for us. The baptism of the Spirit (xiv. 16), the manifestation of the Son (xiv. 21), the indwelling of the Father (xiv. 23), the abiding in Christ's love (xv. 10), the privilege of His holy friendship (xv. 14), and the power of all-prevailing prayer (xv. 16),--all wait for the obedient.

Let us take home the lessons. Now we know the great reason why we have not had power in faith to pray prevailingly. Our life was not as it should have been: simple downright obedience, abiding fruitfulness, was not its chief mark. And with our whole heart we approve of the Divine appointment: men to whom God is to give such influence in the rule of the world, as at their request to do what otherwise would not have taken place, men whose will is to guide the path in which God's will is to work, must be men who have themselves learned obedience, whose loyalty and submission to authority must be above all suspicion. Our whole soul approves the law: obedience and fruit-bearing, the path to prevailing prayer. And with shame we acknowledge how little our lives have yet borne this stamp.

Let us yield ourselves to take up the appointment the Saviour gives us. Let us study His relation to us as Master. Let us seek no more with each new day to think in the first place of comfort, or joy, or blessing. Let the first thought be: I belong to the Master. Every moment and every movement I must act as His property, as a part of Himself, as one who only seeks to know and do His will. A servant, a slave of Jesus Christ,--let this be the spirit that animates me. If He says, 'No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends,' let us accept the place of friends: 'Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you.'

The one thing He commands us as His branches is to bear fruit. Let us live to bless others, to testify of the life and the love there is in Jesus. Let us in faith and obedience give our whole life to that which Jesus chose us for and appointed us to--fruit-bearing. As we think of His electing us to this, and take up our appointment as coming from Him who always gives all He demands, we shall grow strong in the confidence that a life of fruit-bearing, abounding and abiding, is within our reach. And we shall understand why this fruit-bearing alone can be the path to the place of all prevailing prayer. It is the man who, in obedience to the Christ of God, is proving that he is doing what his Lord wills, for whom the Father will do whatsoever he will: 'Whatsoever we ask we receive, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.'

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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Blessed Master! teach me to apprehend fully what I only partly realize, that it is only through the will of God, accepted and acted out in obedience to His commands, that we obtain the power to grasp His will in His promises and fully to appropriate them in our prayers. And teach me that it is in the path of fruit-bearing that the deeper growth of the branch into the Vine can be perfected, and we attain to the perfect oneness with Thyself in which we ask whatsoever we will.

O Lord! Reveal to us, we pray Thee, how with all the hosts of heaven, and with Thyself the Son on earth, and with all the men of faith who have glorified Thee on earth, obedience to God is our highest privilege, because it gives access to oneness with Himself in that which is His highest glory--His all perfect will. And reveal to us, we pray Thee, how in keeping Thy commandments and bearing fruit according to Thy will, our spiritual nature will grow up to the full stature of the perfect man, with power to ask and to receive whatsoever we will.

O Lord Jesus! Reveal Thyself to us, and the reality of Thy purpose and Thy power to make these Thy wonderful promises the daily experience of all who utterly yield themselves to Thee and Thy words. Amen.

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