

Travailing in Soul

by George Kulp

The sermon emphasizes the importance of solitude in prayer, the burden for souls, and the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:11, Isaiah 66:8, Jeremiah 9:1, Matthew 6:6, Romans 9:3

Topics: "Prevailing Prayer", "Burdened Heart"

Description

George Kulp preaches on the power of prevailing prayer, emphasizing the importance of being alone with God in prayer, as seen in the lives of biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, and others. John Smith, known for his deep compassion and fervent prayers for souls, exemplified this principle by spending hours alone with God, pleading for the salvation of others. His genuine empathy for sinners led him to weep with those who weep and to carry a daily burden for souls, believing that true conversion comes from a heart burdened for the lost.

Transcript

"For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied."

"Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

In every instance the man who prevails in prayer is the man who is alone as he prays with God. Abraham leaves Sarah behind when he pleads with Him for Sodom; and if he fails, it is because he ceases to ask before God ceases to grant. Moses is by himself beside the bush in the wilderness. Joshua is alone when Christ comes to him as an armed man. Gideon and Jephthah are by themselves when commissioned to save Israel. Once does Elijah raise a child from the dead, and Elisha does the same, and in each case not even the mothers come in, while the prophet alone with God asks and receives. So of Ezekiel, so of Daniel. Although others are present, Saul journeying to Damascus is alone with Christ after that He breaks upon him. Cornelius is praying by himself when the angel flashes upon his solitude; nor is any one with Peter upon the housetop when he is prepared to go to the Gentiles for the first time. One John is alone in

the wilderness, another John is by himself in Patmos, when nearest God. It is when alone under his fig-tree in prayer that Jesus sees Nathaniel. All religious biography, our own closest communion and success with God, show what Christ means when, as if it were the only way to pray, He says: "And thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

John Smith spent many an hour alone with God pleading for souls, and, jealous for His Master's cause, sought opportunities to personally present to the individual the claims of the Gospel. Some eminent ministers have been possessed by so great a jealousy for the honor of God, and by so determined a resentment against sin, that their minds have been shaded by sternness, rather than softened by compassion.

But there was a native softness and susceptibility about Mr. Smith's affection which, when sanctified by the power of grace, would have peculiarly disposed him, had he been merely an ordinary Christian, to weep with those who weep. And while, on the one hand, as will be hereafter shown, he never forgot the claims of the Divine purity, and thus invested with an extraordinary power in his denunciations of sin, he preserved the full-flowing tide of human feeling, and the condition of sinners inspired his heart with an unutterable pity. He entered so fully into their misery and peril, and had so poignant and distressing a sense of the malignity and heinousness of their violations of the law, as to be often indescribably oppressed. It was a settled principle with him to "confess the sins of the people." "I remember," says Mr. Clarkson, "to have heard him remark, that 'unless a preacher carries about with him a daily burden, he is not likely to see many sinners converted to God.'" That he himself carried about this burden, Mr. Calder's testimony will be sufficient to evince. This gentleman remarks: "I have often seen him come downstairs in the morning, after spending several hours in prayer, with his eyes swollen with weeping. He would soon introduce the subject of his anxiety by saying, 'I am a broken-hearted man; yes, indeed, I am an unhappy man; not for myself, but on account of others. God has given me such a sight of the value of precious souls, that I cannot live if souls be not saved. Oh, give me souls, or else I die!'"

And as the sympathy which he felt for sinners was unusually strong, so was it also peculiarly practical. This was strikingly manifested in the case of penitents. "When you are with people in distress on account of their sins," he sometimes said, "you must not only pray for them, but you must throw yourself into their circumstances; you must be a penitent too; they must pray through you, and what you say must be exactly what they would say if they knew how." He carried out the same principle into the matter of faith; and he has related instances in which, when he has been laboring to exert the faith of sympathy, actual faith has arisen correspondingly in the mind of the sinner, and the power of God and of salvation have burst upon both, as they simultaneously appropriated the atonement of Christ.

We now give our readers a statement of the way of salvation that is very simple and happy. It is a specimen of the form in which John Smith greatly delighted to propound the truth:

"Jesus Christ is the gift of God to a lost world. It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. Faith is the condition on which we receive the blessings of the Gospel. I am a lost sinner. Jesus is offered to me. I trust in Him and am saved. I continue to trust, and am continually saved. God testifies this by His Holy Spirit. So all the way through, in every situation, and in all circumstances, if we only trust in Christ, we cannot be confounded. What is it that I want? It is in Christ, and Christ is offered to me; then I must take what I want in Christ. Nothing but a want of this faith can prevent me from enjoying the blessing. This completely strips man, and puts the honor of God's grace on Christ. This is the Gospel, good news,

glad tidings. 'Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will to men.'

'O for a trumpet voice,

On all the world to call!'"

Of the progress of the work of God he remarks: "I think we are rising a little throughout the circuit. My dear colleague has had some glorious seasons. At Framfield, a number of praying souls were met together to spend a day during the Christmas holidays. Mr. Calder had to go that way; he called, and preached to them. While he was preaching, the power of God came down. Several cried aloud for mercy. I suppose there were twelve in distress, and one of the local preachers was enabled to believe for entire sanctification."

At the District-Meeting held in London in the month of May, Mr. Smith was appointed to assist in conducting a watch-night at City-road Chapel. The whole of the preceding afternoon he spent in earnest entreaty for the Divine blessing upon the meeting. He had great enlargement in delivering an exhortation on the occasion; and while he was afterwards engaged in prayer, the influence of the Holy Spirit descended in an unusual manner. The effect was extraordinary. Some cried aloud under a consciousness of their sin and peril; some were unable to repress exclamations of praise to God; while others were so overwhelmed as to be obliged to retire from the chapel. Among these last was a baker, who had been accustomed to follow his business on the Sabbath-day. His alarm was so powerful that he was bowed down towards the earth, and it was with great difficulty that he succeeded in reaching his own house. When he retired to bed, sleep had forsaken him. He arose in inexpressible agony, and casting himself on his knees, wrestled with God for about two hours, when the Lord pardoned his sins, and filled his heart with joy, and his mouth with thanksgiving. His wife also soon experienced the same blessing; the immediate result of which was, that they altogether relinquished baking on the Sabbath day, and sacrificed the gains of iniquity, which amounted to one guinea per week. "I had an interview with them," says Mr. Clarkson, "about two years afterwards, and they assured me that the Lord had so prospered them in their business that they had been gainers ever since.

Honoring God always pays. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. A young man held a position as confidential clerk in a large banking house. He was a decided Christian, but not a demonstrative one. One Saturday the president came to him, and handing him a bundle of papers, told him they must be copied and ready for use Monday morning. "I will have to work all Sunday to finish that job." "That may be," said the president, "but my work must be done when I want it, and my employees must meet my wishes." "But I am a Sunday School superintendent," said the clerk, "and I would not have my scholars know that I worked on Sunday for your salary." "Well, you must choose between complying with my wishes and losing your place." "With such an alternative, I should not hesitate a moment," was the reply. The president was not prepared for such a stout resistance, and was a little touched. "You'd better consider well what you're doing," he said; "I can put you in the forefront of financiers; if I discharge you, you'll be ruined." "'I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread,' that was my father's text." said the young man.

Of course there could be but one issue. The clerk took his discharge. Sunday was a gloomy one in his house; his associates said he was a fool to be so nice. On Monday, the banker was visited by some gentlemen; they were about to start a bank, they said; they wanted a cashier, a man prompt, capable,

reliable. "I know just the man you want." "Where is he now?" "He is not in any employment. He has been discharged." "We don't want any cast-off man," was the reply; "if the man is what you say, he would not be unemployed, for such men are Tare." "The fact is," said the president, "I discharged him because he wouldn't work Sundays; even then I admired his principles, and I'll be his bondsman to any amount." Over the mantel of this cashier's dining-room can be found, in a handsome frame, the golden text, "I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

In the course of the District-Meeting, some conversation took place on the decrease in the number of members during the preceding year, and several measures were suggested to prevent the recurrence of so melancholy a circumstance. Among those who spoke on the subject, was a preacher of the highest character and influence, who had known Mr. Smith before he entered on the itinerant work, and who highly estimated his devotedness and ardor. After having alluded to several other particulars, he added, with much emphasis: "If we all possessed the burning zeal of the brother who addressed us last night, we should not have to lament any diminution of our societies." This remark, from such a quarter, had a happy effect upon the minds of those who had previously been unacquainted with the worth of the person to whom it referred.

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