

Prayer

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

Continuance in prayer is essential for a healthy and vigorous spiritual life, making God's presence real, power manifest, and will clear, and making God's service easy.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 12:23, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 55:17, Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, Acts 6:4, Romans 8:26, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

W.H. Griffith Thomas emphasizes the importance of prayer as the pure atmosphere necessary for a healthy spiritual life, just like food is essential for the body. He delves into the concept of continuance in prayer, highlighting that it goes beyond mere words, focusing on the soul's submission, desire, trust, and fellowship with God. Thomas explains how continuance in prayer makes God's presence, power, will, and service evident in the believer's life, ultimately leading to a deeper relationship with God and readiness for His work.

Transcript

In addition to good, suitable, and regular food, the body requires pure atmosphere in order to a healthy and vigorous life. In like manner the spiritual life must have both the food of God's Word and also the pure atmosphere of prayer if it is to be thoroughly healthy, strong, and true. We are now to consider some of the aspects of prayer as the "Christian's vital breath" and "native air".

The illustration of breathing may help to introduce a subject that fills so prominent a part in the revelation of God's will. Breathing is the function of a natural, healthy life. It is a spontaneous, unconscious, incessant act and habit, and marks the person as in normal health and vigour. So, also, if the spiritual life be healthy, prayer will be the natural, spontaneous, and unceasing expression of it. This is what the Apostle spoke of as "continuing instant in prayer".

We may therefore be sure that the emphasis laid upon continual prayer in the Word of God, and the prominence given to it in the lives of all the most eminent Christians in all ages, are two sure tokens of its absolute necessity for every believer.

I. Continuance In Prayer - What It Means

The word translated "continuing" in prayer (Rom. 12:12, and Col. 4:2) is used in several connections, which illustrate its meaning in prayer. It is used of the little boat that waited on our Lord continually (Mark 3:9); of the Apostles giving themselves to their ministry (Acts 6:4); of the Disciples on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42); of Simon Magus remaining with Philip (Acts 8:13). It includes the ideas of "clinging closely to and remaining constant in," and implies continuous devotion expressed in steadfastness and earnestness.

It means, therefore, very much more than frequently recurring times of prayer. This is to water down the true idea; for the thought is of an attitude rather than an act, even though it be frequently performed. Prayer is something vastly beyond the utterance of words; it is the relation and constant attitude of the soul to God.

This attitude towards God consists of several elements, chief among them being submission, desire, trust, fellowship. There is first and foremost the submission of the soul to God, the attitude of surrender whereby we are in harmony with the will of God. Then there is the desire of the soul for God, the aspiration and longing for His presence and grace. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth." "My heart ... crieth out for ... the living God." Then comes the confidence of the soul in God, the sense of dependence on Him, and the utter distrust of self and our own will and way. Last of all there is the fellowship of the soul with God, the delight in His presence and freedom of communication with Him at all times.

This is something of the meaning of continuance in prayer, and it can be easily seen that this may be at times quite independent of words. It is the soul's realization of God and its deep, quiet joy in His presence and grace.

II. Continuance In Prayer - What It Does

It makes God's presence very real. This presence brings peace, which calms the soul in the presence of dangers. It brings joy, which cheers the soul in the pathway of difficulty and duty. It brings glory, which sheds a radiance on ordinary life and illuminates the commonest tasks with the light of heaven.

It makes God's power very manifest. The heart is thereby garrisoned against sin. There is nothing like continuance in prayer to keep us from sin. The soul is thereby armed against temptation, for the life of prayer surrounds us with Divine power. The life is thus protected against leakage. God's power seals up the crevices and preserves the spiritual life intact.

It makes God's will clear. By a life of prayer the perceptions of the soul are clarified. By it the moral powers of the soul are kept balanced. By it the determining powers are strengthened and rendered vigorous, and decisions are more easily and safely made. Thereby we have preservation from error at any critical moment, because through a life of prayer we learn to understand the providence and guidance of God much more clearly, and are enabled to "perceive and know what things we ought to do, and have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same." There is, as it were, an accumulation of grace and power in the ordinary life which makes us ready for all emergencies.

It makes God's service easy. Through continuance in prayer we are "strengthened with all might according to His glorious power" for all necessary service. God's calls are readily met because we are prepared, "ready unto every good work". And His service is seen to be perfect freedom, "whom to serve is to reign" ("cui servire est regnare"), and we learn to realize in blessed experience that His yoke is indeed easy and His burden light.

III. Continuance In Prayer - What It Needs

We must honour the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the source, the atmosphere, the power of prayer. He is the "Spirit of Grace and Supplication". Three times He is very clearly associated with prayer (Rom. 8:26-27, Eph. 6:18, Jude 20), and we must honour Him definitely and constantly if we would know the secret of a life of prayer.

We must meditate on the Word of God. The food of the Scriptures, God's revelation of His will, is needed to sustain prayer. The promises are to elicit prayer. The Word and prayer always go together, and no prayer is of use that is not based on, warranted by, and saturated with the Word of God.

We must include prayer for others. True prayer cannot be limited to our own needs. As the soul learns more of God's will and purpose, it enlarges itself and goes out in love and pity for all the souls for whom Christ died. Intercession is not only a definite but a very prominent part of the real Christian life (1 Sam. 12:23). Our priesthood means intercession. Our Lord's work has intercession for its crowning point (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25). The Holy Ghost intercedes. We, too, must pray for others, and in so praying our own life of prayer will be fully realized.

We must have special occasions for prayer. The life is fed by these. The attitude is based upon acts. The life of the body depends on separate and successive acts, whether of breathing or eating, and so it is with the soul. These times of prayer are the storage, the reservoir of daily power and progress.

The best times for this are undoubtedly the morning and evening, and of these the morning is by far the most important. A few moments at midday is also of immense help. But whenever it be, time for it we must have, and, if necessary, make.

Let us, then, begin at once, starting with but five minutes, and not attempting too much at once. The five will soon grow to six, seven, eight, ten, and even more. The habit will come to be a delight. It will prove as strange and impossible to omit it as our regular meals. God's presence will be more and more a delight; God's power will more and more be felt; God's blessing more and more realized in all our influence and service.

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