

THE PRAYERFULNESS IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM

by Rev. David Park

PRAYER is the way of approach to God, and the soul-winner keeps it open by constant use. It is the channel by which all spiritual blessings and power are received, and therefore the life of the soul-winner must be one of ceaseless prayer. *'Pray without ceasing,'* wrote Paul. It is the breath of the soul, and, other things being equal, it is the secret of power.

It is written of the Lord Jesus, *'And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God' (Luke 6:12)*. And mighty works followed this.

What an amazing statement is this: *'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them' (Mark 11:24)*. (See *John 16:23.15:7*). And yet, amazing as these promises are, they stand there, in *'the Scripture of truth,'* as a challenge to every child of God who is jealous for God's glory and who seeks the salvation of souls.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer before he was a man of action. Four months elapsed between the stirrings of his secret desire to help his people and his open request to the king (*Nehemiah 1:1,2,8*). He spent four months praying about a project, which would take less than two months to complete (*Nehemiah 6:15*). Prayer paves the way for successful evangelism.

Before the church at Antioch sent out Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary trip, the congregation fasted, prayed, laid hands on them and sent them away (*Acts 13:3*). Before Paul started his second missionary tour, he and Silas, were *'commended by the brethren to the grace of God' (Acts 15:40)*. Europe was opened up for the Gospel through prayer.

Three times the Gospels record the Father's voice speaking from heaven: at the baptism (*Luke 3:22*), at the transfiguration (*Luke 9:35*), and at the visit of the Greeks (*John 12:28*). In every case the voice came after a prayer by Jesus. There will always be a response from heaven when prayer is offered (*Revelation 8:3-5*). How the personal evangelist needs to pray.

1. THE SOUL-WINNER MUST PRAY SECRETLY

He must get alone with God, and pour into his Heavenly Father's ear intercessions and pleadings, if he would have good success. There is no substitute for secret waiting upon God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for the gifts of wisdom, strength, courage, hope, faith and discernment of times and spirits, and for a glowing, burning, comprehensive message from Him to the people.

If any man who would be a soul-winner should fail at this point, he will in due time fail at every point. Jesus said: *'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' (Matthew 6:6)*. Here, then, is one secret of success - communion in the closet with God. Manner of prayer - Method of Prayer - Motive of Prayer.

2. THE SOUL-WINNER MUST PRAY SPECIFICALLY

Once, when Jesus was leaving Jericho with His disciples, blind Bartimaeus sat by the wayside begging; and when he heard that Jesus was passing by, he began to cry out, and say: *'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.'* But that prayer was not definite - it was altogether too general. Jesus knew what Bartimaeus wanted, but He desired Bartimaeus to state exactly what he desired, and said to him: *'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?'* Then the blind man prayed a definite prayer: *'Lord, that I might receive my sight.'* And the definite prayer, there and then, received a definite answer, for Jesus said unto him, *'Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole and immediately he received his sight'* (Mark 10).

We should be as definite when we go to God in asking Him for what we want, as we are when we go shopping. The salesman is prepared to sell us anything and everything in the shop, but he in reality sells us nothing until we tell him what we want. So it is with our Heavenly Father. We must be specific in prayer.

3. THE SOUL-WINNER MUST PRAY SINCERELY

Paul says: *'For we have not an high Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'* And adds: *'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need'* (Hebrews 4:15,16).

Of course, this boldness must be coupled with humility, but the greater the humility, the greater the boldness, if mixed with faith. I have often been amused and amazed at the boldness with which children come to their parents for the things they need and how gladly the true parent responds to the child's request, especially if it expresses a genuine need.

And the Lord Jesus says, *'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'* (Luke 11:13). It is not our Heavenly Father's will to disappoint His trusting children, but rather to give them their utmost desire - yea, *'exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think'* (Ephesians 3:20).

4. THE SOUL-WINNER MUST PRAY STEADFASTLY

The soul-winner's prayer must be importune. Jesus teaches this very clearly in His parable of the insistent friend (Luke 11:5-10); and in His parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8), by which He means to teach that we are to hold on in prayer till we get an answer. If the answer is delayed, our own hearts will be searched, the purity of our motives will be proved, and our faith will be tried, developed and strengthened for future and greater triumphs.

Jesus prayed three times that the cup of death might pass from Him. And Paul tells us that He was heard.

Daniel abstained from all pleasant food for three weeks at one time, and prayed until God appeared unto him, and said, *'O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong,*

yea, be strong'; and said: *'I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth.'* and then told him all that he desired to know (*Daniel 10:19,21*).

And Elijah, after his victory over the priests of Baal, sent his servants seven times to look for the cloud that should bring rain, while he bowed his face between his knees and poured out his heart to God in prayer. He persevered in prayer until the cloud appeared that soon brought floods of rain. Though the answer is delayed, it is not God's purpose to deny us without letting us know the reason why.

5. THE SOUL-WINNER MUST PRAY SCRIPTURALLY

The soul-winner's prayer must be for the glory of God, and according to His will. If we ask things simply to gratify our own desires, God cannot grant them. James said of certain ones: *'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts'* (*James 4:3*).

However; John said, *'This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will he heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him'* (*1 John 5:14-15*).

Jesus said: *'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you'* (*John 15:7*).

We are to ask according to the things that are revealed as His will in His Word, and according to the principles laid down therein; therefore, we should study His Word constantly and hide it in our heart, and see to it that we hide ourselves in His heart.

Thus being filled with the truth we shall not ask amiss and being filled with the Spirit we shall not be denied. The soul-winner's prayer must be mixed with faith and must be believing prayer, *'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them'* (*Mark 11:24*).

The man or woman whose faith is constantly wavering shall receive nothing from the Lord. However, keep in mind that, *'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son,'* said Jesus (*John 14:13*).

God is looking for the prayerful intercessions of His people. It is sad today that there is little or no earnest intercession. Isaiah spoke about the Lord (*Isaiah 59*) who *'wondered that there was no intercessor.'*