

Divine Efficacy of Prayer

By Arthur T. Pierson



All the greatest needs, both of the Church and of the world, may be included in one: the need of a higher standard of godliness. The all-embracing secret of a truly godly life is close and constant contact with the unseen God; that contact is learned and practiced, as nowhere else, in the secret place of supplication and intercession.

Our Lord's first lesson in the school of prayer was, and still is: "Enter into thy closet" (Matt. 6:6, kjv). The "closet" is the closed place, where we are shut in alone with God, where the human spirit waits upon an unseen Presence, learns to recognize Him who is a Spirit, and cultivates His acquaintance, fellowship, and friendship.

The Praying Soul

To the praying soul there becomes possible the faith which is the grasp of the human spirit upon the realities and verities of the unseen world.

To the praying soul there becomes possible the patience, which is the habit of waiting for results yet unseen and hopes yet unrealized. To the praying soul there becomes possible the love that, like a celestial flood, drowns out evil tempers and hateful dispositions, and introduces us to a new world of gentle and generous frames.

Those who yearn for revivals naturally lay much stress on preaching. But what is preaching without praying! Sermons are but pulpit performances, learned essays, rhetorical orations,

popular lectures, or may be political harangues, until God gives, in answer to earnest prayer, the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue. It is only he who prays that can truly preach.

Praying souls become prevailing saints. Those who get farthest on in the school of prayer and learn most of its hidden secrets often develop a sort of prescience which comes nearest to the prophetic spirit, the Holy Spirit showing them "things to come." They seem to know something of the purpose of God, to anticipate His plans, and to forecast the history of their own times.

A Mysterious Union

Like the Bible, prayer is self-evidencing. It is a mysterious union of Divine and human elements not easy of explanation; but to him who prays and puts God to the test along the lines of His own precepts and promises, God proves how real a force prayer is in His moral universe. The best way to prop up prayer is to practice it.

Prayer, likewise, keeps one steadfast in faith and all holy activity. Hence, as surely as God is lifting His people to a higher level of spirituality, and moving them to a more unselfish and self-denying service, there will be new emphasis laid by them upon supplication, and especially upon intercession.

We cannot too strongly emphasize that to keep in close touch with God in the secret chamber of His presence is the great fundamental underlying purpose of prayer. To speak with God is a priceless privilege; but what shall be said of having and hearing Him speak with us! We can tell Him nothing He does not know; but He can tell us what we do not know, no imagination has ever conceived, no research ever unveiled.

The highest of all possible attainments is the knowledge of God, and this is the practical mode of His revelation of

Himself. Even His holy Word needs to be read in the light of His own presence if it is to be understood. The praying soul hears God speak.

Prayer Imparts God's Power

In favor of close contact with the living God in prayer, there is another reason that rises perhaps to a still higher level. Prayer not only puts us in touch with God, and gives knowledge of Him and His ways, but it imparts to us His power.

Things which are impossible with man are possible with God, and with a man in whom God is. Prayer is the secret of imparted power from God, and nothing else can take its place. Absolute weakness follows the neglect of secret communion with God—and the weakness is the more deplorable, because it is often unconscious and unsuspected, especially when one has never yet known what true power is.

We see men of prayer quietly achieving results of the most surprising character. They have the calm of God, no hurry, or worry, or flurry; no anxiety, or care, no excitement or hustle or bustle. They do great things for God, yet they are little in their own eyes; they carry great loads, and yet are not weary nor faint; they face great crises, and yet are not troubled.

Who will join the risen Lord in a service of intercession? God is calling His people to a revival of faith in the Divine efficacy of prayer.

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