

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

PRAYER AND LEADERSHIP

Dear Brethren,

Calvary greetings to you in the most wonderful name of our Lord and Master. In this lesson, we shall be looking in particular at Prayer and Leadership. However, I would like us to examine in brief, the background of the 'End Time Doctrine' which I prefer to call the 'Future Hope Doctrine' that we may be able to appreciate its positive aspect. I hope you would be diligent enough to read and learn from the lesson. I believe it to go a long way in encouraging you to carry-on most perfectly and without fear, "your assignment" in this nation.

Prayer is the most ancient, most universal and most intensive expression of the religious instinct. It includes the simplest speech of infant lips and the sublime entreaties of older age. All reach the Majesty on high. Prayer is indeed the Christian's vital breath and native air. The Spiritual Leader should outpace the rest of the church, above all, in prayer. And yet the most advanced leader is conscious of the possibility of endless development in his prayer life. Nor does he ever feel that he has "already attained." Great Leaders of the Bible were great at prayer. They were not Leaders because of brilliancy of thought, because they were exhaustless in resources, because of their magnificent culture or native endowment, but because by the power of prayer, they could mobilise the power of God."

But, strange paradox, most of us find it hard to pray. We do not naturally delight in drawing near to God. We sometimes pay lip service to the delight and power of prayer. We call it indispensable, we know the Scriptures call for it. Yet we often fail to pray. In prayer we deal directly with God and only in a secondary sense other people. The goal of prayer is the ear of God. Prayer moves others through God's influence on them. It is not the prayer that moves people, but the God to whom we pray.

The Spiritual Leader will be alert to the most effective way to influence people. "It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone." It is one thing to believe such power is available, but another thing to practice it. People are difficult to move; it is much easier to pray for things or provisions than to deal with the stubbornness of the human heart. But in just these intricate situations the Leader must use God's power to move human hearts in the direction he believes to be the will of God. Through prayer the Leader has the key to that complicated lock.

The Christian Leader who seeks an example to follow does well to turn to the life of Jesus Himself. Our belief in the necessity of prayer comes from observing His life. Surely if anyone could have sustained life without prayer, it would be the very Son of God Himself. If prayer were silly or unnecessary, Jesus would not have wasted His time at it. But wait! Prayer was the dominant feature of His life and a recurring part of His teaching. Prayer kept His vision sharp and clear. Prayer gave Him courage to endure the perfect but painful will of His Father. Prayer paved the way for transfiguration. To Jesus, prayer was not a hasty add-on, but a joyous necessity.

Christ spent full nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). He often rose before dawn to have unbroken communion with His Father (Mark 1:35). The great crises of His life and ministry began with periods of special prayer, as in Luke 5:16; "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" – a statement that indicates a regular habit. By word and example He instructed His disciples on the importance of solitude in prayer (Mark 6:46, following the feeding of the five thousand; Luke 9:28, preceding the Transfiguration). To the Pastors who has the responsibility of selecting personnel for specific spiritual responsibilities, the example of the Lord's spending the night in prayer before making His choice of apostles (Luke 6:12) is luminous.

True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice, Jesus performed miracles without a sign of outward strain from any kind of acrobatic display, but "he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). Sometimes our prayers are pale and weak compared to those of Paul or Epaphras. "Epaphras... is always wrestling in prayer for you," wrote Paul in Colossians 4:12. And to the same group: "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you" (Colossians 2:1). The Greek word used for "struggle" here is the root for our word "agony" and "agonise." It is used to describe a person struggling at work until utterly weary (Col. 1:29), or competing in the arena for an athletic prize (I Corinthians 9:25). It describes a soldier battling for his life (I Tim. 6:12). Or a man struggling to deliver his friends from danger (John 18:36). True prayer is a strenuous spiritual exercise that demands the utmost mental discipline and concentration.

The Bible often explains prayer as spiritual warfare. "For our struggle is... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). In this struggle phase of prayer, three personalities are engaged. Between God and the devil stands the Christian at prayer. Though weak alone, the Christian plays a strategic role in the struggle between the dragon and the Lamb. The praying Leader wields no personal power and authority, but authority delegated by the victorious Christ to whom that faithful believer is united by faith. Faith is like a network through which the victory won on Calvary reaches the devil's captives and delivers them from darkness into light.

Jesus was not so much concerned over wicked people and their deeds as with the forces of evil that caused those people to sin. Behind Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal was the sinister hand of Satan. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was the Lord's response to Peter's presumptuous rebuke. All around us are people bound in sin, captives to the devil. Our prayers should ascent not only for them, but also against Satan, who holds them as his prize. Satan must be compelled to relax his grip, and this can only be achieved by Christ's victory on the cross. As Jesus dealt with sin's cause rather than effect, so the Spiritual Leader should adopt the same method in prayer. And the Leader must know how to help those following along in that same spiritual warfare.

In a telling illustration, Jesus compared Satan to a strong man, fully armed. Before anyone can enter such a man's house and set captives free, the man must first be bound. Only then can a rescue succeed (Matthew 12:29). What could it mean to "tie up the strong man" except to neutralise his might through the overcoming power of Christ who came "to destroy (nullify, render inoperative) the works of the devil?" And how can that happen except by the prayer of faith that lays hold of the victory of Calvary and claim it for the problem at hand?

We cannot hope to effect a rescue from Satan's den without first disarming the adversary. God opens His divine authority through prayer, and we can confidently claim it. Jesus promised His disciples: "I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

We cannot learn about prayer except by praying. No philosophy has ever taught a soul to pray. The intellectual problems associated with prayer are met in the joy of answered prayer and closer fellowship with God. Prevailing prayer that moves people is the outcome of a correct relationship with God. The Bible is very clear on the reasons why prayers go unanswered, and every reason centres on the believer's relationship with God. God will not co-operate with prayers of mere self-interest, or prayers that come from impure motives. The Christian Leader who clings to sin closes the ear of God. Least of all will God tolerate hatred, selfishness, pride, rebellion and all that are peculiar to weak Christian Leaders.

We are encouraged to note that Paul, probably the greatest human champion of prayer, confessed, "We do not know what we ought to pray for" And then he hastened to add, "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27). The Spirit joins in prayer and pours His supplications into our own.

The Spirit delights to help us pray. In each of our three chief handicaps, we can count on the Spirit's help. Sometimes we are kept from prayer by sin in our heart. But as we grow in trust and submission, the Holy Spirit leads us to the blood of Christ, which cleanses every stain. Sometimes we make our feelings and reasoning to be our theology, forgetting that Christians are to live by faith and not by sight or situation. God reveals His plans and truth to His servants gradually and progressively. But when we are ignorant of this fact, it hinders our prayers. However, the Spirit knows the mind of God and shares that knowledge with as many as will wait and listen (I Corinthians 2:9-10). The Spirit does this by giving us a clear conviction on whether a particular situation is part of God's will for us, or not. Sometimes we are earthbound because of the infirmity of the body. We get sick, we feel ill, and we are weak. The spirit will quicken our bodies and enable us to rise above weaknesses.

Then, as if these three conditions were not enough, the Spiritual Leader must oppose Satan in prayer. Satan will try to depress, to create doubt and discouragement, to keep a Leader from communion with God. In the Holy Spirit, we have a heavenly ally against this supernatural foe. Spiritual Leaders should know the experience of praying in the Spirit, as part of their daily walk. Do we ever try to live independently of the Spirit? Do we fail to see full answers to prayer? We can read all day about prayer, and experience little of its power, and so stunt our service.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING

Ask God to raise up workers and intercessors in the harvest field. Ask God for strong men of faith who will work the works of God in this end time harvests. There are many great opportunities, but the workers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will thrust forth the labourers into these opportunities to bring glory to His precious name.

Bind and cast out those principalities and powers and rulers of darkness in this world and spiritual wickedness in high places: Taoism, Buddhism, Communism, Atheism, New Age Movement, Secular Humanism, Mohammadanism, Hinduism, Homosexuality, Shintoism, Seikism, Judaism, Jehovah Witness, Mormonism, Masonry, debt addiction, pleasure addiction, pornography and abortion. Cast out these deceptions and release them to the gift of salvation through the precious Blood of Jesus.

Bind Laziness, Indifference, Denominationalism, Ritualism, Legalism, Deception and Witchcraft in the Body of Christ and release the grace of Unity, Repentance, Diligence and Holiness in Jesus' mighty name and with All Christians' Fellowship as a point of contact.

Ask God to release the wealth of the wicked stored up for the just to be used for the propagation of the Gospel in this Ministry.

The principality, Queen of Religion, who is directly under Satan, has in his keeping more people of this nation blinded to the Gospel than any other spirit. Use your intercessory prayer to bring this principality to naught. This could be the reason why Italians are hardly seen among the congregation in the living Churches.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE FOR ME AND YOU

The coming of Christ has sometimes become a thing that we're afraid of, believing that it's a thing of horror rather than hope for the Church. Some people make it the central focus of their theology and anyone listening to them could be forgiven for thinking that the chief corner-stone of Christian theology is the relationship of the millennium and the second coming, and not even the death on the cross.

Several branches of the Christian church (not to mention some major cults) and individuals heretically places a great deal of emphasis on the subject of end-time prophesy, the Anti-Christ and the entire book of revelation. The Bible is read with one eye, and the other eye is focused on current world events, social and political – especially with regard to the Middle-East problems and events in Europe that are seemingly identified with these prophecies.

Nevertheless, we are not ignorant of the facts that: 'Democracy is now world-wide (The Undisputed Leader – Anti-Christ); A global economy already exists; Instant communication is available for the entire planet: A one-world religion is only one step away.

My dear brethren, we need not be afraid. The Bible reassures us, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report, or letter... 2 Thess. 2:1-3. In fact, our effort should be directed to God winning cause to speed up the coming of Christ (I Thessalonians 5:4, 2 Peter 3:11). The certainty of Jesus' coming is not an excuse for "opting out", or "for laziness", just the opposite. Most certainly it must mean the preaching of the Gospel in the light of a future judgement. The awesome responsibility of knowing that judgement must come, coupled with an accountability for failure to announce it is taught in Ezekiel 33:1-15; Colossians 3:23-24.

What does Paul ask the Christians in Thessalonica to do with the fact of Christ's coming again (I Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11). It's important to notice what Paul says here. He tells us to "encourage one another with these words." Very often the way some people handle the topic of Christ's return, you might think that Paul wrote: 'Pack your loads and run back to Africa.'

The challenge to us today is to communicate this glorious hope of Christ's coming to those who have never heard about it, to those who have strayed away from God and to those who are discouraged, in such a way that the message will touch their hearts and allow God to change their lives. (Can we say that Christ would be happy to see the whole of Italians perished?).

I therefore enjoined you not to worry too much about rapture or millennium theology, or what one may ignorantly consider inappropriate in the policy of the church, we should be concerned with our responsibilities to this Nation. When Jesus returns, we won't be in control of events, He will, and we can trust Him. Today we have the opportunity to build His kingdom in the lives of those around us, and give support to the Church in this endeavour.

Yours in the Masters service,

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