

The Word and Prayer; Preaching and Prayer; Wholeheartedness

by Andrew Murray

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a wholehearted surrender to God and the need for a balance between prayer and the word in our lives.

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:4, Matthew 27:46

Topics: "The Power of Prayer", "Wholeheartedness in Faith"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the vital connection between the Word of God and prayer, asserting that a balanced life of both leads to spiritual health and power. He illustrates how Jesus exemplified this balance, treasuring the Word and engaging in prayer throughout His life, culminating in His cry on the cross. Murray urges believers to seek a transformation through the Holy Spirit, which will enable them to engage wholeheartedly in both prayer and the Word. He warns that preaching without prayer lacks the life-giving Spirit, and calls for ministers to commit to fervent prayer to see true spiritual revival. Ultimately, he stresses that wholeheartedness in seeking God is essential for a vibrant spiritual life.

Transcript

Little of the word with little prayer is death to the spiritual life. Much of the word with little prayer gives a sickly life. Much prayer with little of the word gives more life, but without steadfastness. A full measure of the word and prayer each day gives a healthy and powerful life. Think of the Lord Jesus. In his youth and manhood he treasured the word in his heart. In the temptation in the wilderness, and on every opportunity that presented itself - till he cried out on the cross in death, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matt. 27.46). He showed that the word of God filled his heart. And in his prayer life he manifested two things: first, that the word supplies us with material for prayer and encourages us in expecting everything from God. The second is that it is only by prayer that we can live such a life that every word of God can be fulfilled in us. And how then can we come to this, so that the word and prayer may each have its undivided right over us? There is only one answer. Our lives must be wholly transformed. We must get a new, a healthy, a heavenly life, in which the hunger after God's word and the thirst after God express themselves in prayer as naturally as do the needs of our earthly life. Every manifestation of the power of the flesh in us and the weakness of our spiritual life must drive us to the conviction that God will, through the powerful operation of his Holy Spirit, work out a new and strong life in us.

Oh, that we but understood that the Holy Spirit is essentially the Spirit of the word and the Spirit of prayer! He will cause the word to become a joy and a light in our souls, and he will also most surely help us in prayer to know the mind and will of God, and find in it our delight. If we as ministers wish to explain these things and to train God's people for the inheritance which is prepared for them, then we must commit ourselves from this moment forward to the leading of the Holy Spirit; must, in faith in what he will do in us, appropriate the heavenly life of Christ as he lived it here on earth, with certain expectation that the Spirit, who filled him with the word and prayer, will also accomplish that work in us,

Yes, let us believe that the Spirit who is in us is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and that he is in us to make us truly partakers of his life. If we firmly believe this and set our hearts upon it, then there will come a change in our intercourse with the word and prayer such as we could not have thought possible. Believe it firmly; expect it surely.

We are familiar with the vision of the valley of dry bones. We know that the Lord said to the prophet: 'Prophesy upon these bones ... Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live' (Ezek. 37.4, 5). And we know how, when he had done this, there was a noise, and bone came together to its bone, and flesh came up, and skin covered them - but there was no breath in them. The prophesying to the bones - the preaching of the word of God - had a powerful influence. It was the beginning of the great miracle which was about to happen, and there lay an entire army of men newly made. It was the beginning of the work of life in them, but there was no spirit there.

How then the Lord said to the prophet: 'Prophesy unto the wind ... Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live' (verse 9). And when the prophet had done this, the Spirit came upon them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a very great army. Prophesying to the bones, that is, preaching, has accomplished a great work. There lay the beautiful new bodies. But the prophesying to the Spirit, 'Come, O Spirit', that is, prayer, accomplished a far more wonderful thing. The power of the Spirit was revealed through prayer.

Is not the work of our ministers mostly this prophesying to dry bones in making known the promises of God? This is followed sometimes by great results. Everything which belongs to the form of godliness has been brought to perfection; a careless congregation becomes regular and devout, but it remains true for the most part: 'There is no life in them. 'Preaching must be followed by prayer. The preacher must come to see that his preaching is comparatively powerless to bring in a new life till he begins to take time for prayer and, according to the teaching of God's word, strives and labours and continues in prayer, and takes no rest, and gives God no rest, till he bestows the Spirit in overflowing power.

Do you not feel that a change must come in our work? We must learn from Peter to continue in prayer in our ministry of the word. Just as we are zealous preachers, we must be zealous in prayer. We must, with all our power, constantly like Paul, pray unceasingly. For the prayer: 'Come, breathe on these slain' (Ezek. 37.9), the answer is sure.

Wholeheartedness

Experience teaches us that if anyone is engaged in a work in which he is not wholehearted, he will seldom succeed. Just think of a student, or his teacher, a man of business, or a warrior. He who does not give himself wholeheartedly to his calling is not likely to succeed. And that is still more true of religion, and above all of the high and holy task of intercourse in prayer with a holy God and of being always well pleasing to him. It is because of this that God has said so impressively: 'Ye shall seek me, and find me,

when ye shall search for me with all your heart' (Jer. 29.13).

As also more than one of God's servants has said: 'I seek thee with my whole heart.' Have you ever thought how many Christians there are of whom it is all too plain that they do not seek God with the whole heart? When they were in trouble over their sins, they seemed to seek God with the whole heart. But when they knew that they had been pardoned one could see by their lives that they were religious, it is true but no one would think: 'This man has surrendered himself with his whole heart to follow God, and to serve him as the supreme work of his life.'

How is it with you? What does your heart say? While you, as minister, for instance, have given yourself up with wholehearted devotion to fulfil your office faithfully and zealously, will you not perhaps acknowledge: 'I fear, or rather I am convinced, that my unsatisfactory prayer life is to be attributed to nothing else than that I have not lived with a wholehearted surrender of all on earth that could hinder me in fellowship with God.' What a deeply important question to consider in the inner chamber and to give the answer to God! How important to arrive at a plain answer and to utter it all before God! Prayerlessness cannot be overcome as an isolated thing. It is in the closest relationship to the state of the heart. True prayer depends on an undivided heart.

But I cannot give myself that undivided heart which can enable me to say: 'I seek God with my whole heart.' No, that is impossible for you, but God will do it. 'I will give them an heart to know me' (Jer. 24.7). 'I will ... write it [my law] [as a power of life] in their hearts' (Jer. 31.33; Heb. 8. 10). Such promises serve to awaken desire. However weak the desire may be, if there is but the sincere determination to strive after what God holds out to us, then he will himself work in our hearts both to will and to do. It is the great work of the Holy Spirit in us to make us willing and to enable us to seek God with the whole heart. May there not be found in us confusion of face because, while we have given ourselves to so many earthly things with all our heart and strength, yet if anything is said about fellowship with our glorious God it so little affects us that we have not sought him with the whole heart.

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