

Twenty-Second Lesson. 'My Words in You;' Or, the Word and Prayer

by Andrew Murray

The connection between the word and prayer is vital, and hearing God's voice is the secret of assurance and the measure of our words with Him.

Scripture: Psalm 37:4, Psalm 119:11, Isaiah 50:4, Matthew 7:7, John 15:7, Romans 10:17, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:19, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Abiding in Christ", "Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the vital connection between God's Word and prayer, illustrating that prayer is a dialogue where God's voice must be heard for our words to be effective. He explains that abiding in Christ and having His words within us empowers our prayers, aligning our will with God's. Murray highlights that true prayer is not merely about speaking to God but involves listening to His voice, which strengthens our faith and obedience. He encourages believers to let God's Word dwell in them, as this will transform their prayers and lives, leading to answered requests. Ultimately, Murray calls for a deeper relationship with God's Word to enhance our prayer life and spiritual strength.

Transcript

'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'--John xv. 7.

THE vital connection between the word and prayer is one of the simplest and earliest lessons of the Christian life. As that newly-converted heathen put it: I pray--I speak to my father; I read--my Father speaks to me. Before prayer, it is God's word that prepares me for it by revealing what the Father has bid me ask. In prayer, it is God's word strengthens me by giving my faith its warrant and its plea. And after prayer, it is God's word that brings me the answer when I have prayed, for in it the Spirit gives me to hear the Father's voice. Prayer is not monologue but dialogue; God's voice in response to mine in its most essential part. Listening to God's voice is the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine. 'Incline thine ear, and hear;' 'Give ear to me;' Harken to my voice;' are words which God speaks to man as well as man to God. His hearkening will depend on ours; the entrance His words find with me, will be the measure of the power of my words with Him. What God's words are to me, is the test of what He Himself is to me, and so of the uprightness of my desire after Him in prayer.

It is this connection between His word and our prayer that Jesus points to when He says, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' The deep importance of this truth becomes clear if we notice the other expression of which this one has taken the place. More than once Jesus had said, 'Abide in me and I in you.' His abiding in us was the complement and the crown of our abiding in Him. But here, instead of 'Ye in me and I in you,' He says, 'Ye in me and my words in you.' His words abiding are the equivalent of Himself abiding.

What a view is here opened up to us of the place the words of God in Christ are to have in our spiritual life, and especially in our prayer. In a man's words he reveals himself. In his promises he gives himself away, he binds himself to the one who receives his promise. In his commands he sets forth his will, seeks to make himself master of him whose obedience he claims, to guide and use him as if he were part of himself. It is through our words that spirit holds fellowship with spirit, that the spirit of one man passes over and transfers itself into another. It is through the words of a man, heard and accepted, and held fast and obeyed, that he can impart himself to another. But all this in a very relative and limited sense.

But when God, the infinite Being, in whom everything is life and power, spirit and truth, in the very deepest meaning of the words,--when God speaks forth Himself in His words, He does indeed give HIMSELF, His Love and His Life, His Will and His Power, to those who receive these words, in a reality passing comprehension. In every promise He puts Himself in our power to lay hold of and possess; in every command He puts Himself in our power for us to share with Him His Will, His Holiness, His Perfection. In God's Word God gives us HIMSELF; His Word is nothing less than the Eternal Son, Christ Jesus. And so all Christ's words are God's words, full of a Divine quickening life and power. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.'

Those who have made the deaf and dumb their study, tell us how much the power of speaking depends on that of hearing, and how the loss of hearing in children is followed by that of speaking too. This is true in a wider sense: as we hear, so we speak. This is true in the highest sense of our intercourse with God. To offer a prayer--to give utterance to certain wishes and to appeal to certain promises--is an easy thing, and can be learned of man by human wisdom. But to pray in the Spirit, to speak words that reach and touch God, that affect and influence the powers of the unseen world,--such praying, such speaking, depends entirely upon our hearing God's voice. Just as far as we listen to the voice and language that God speaks, and in the words of God receive His thoughts, His mind, His life, into our heart, we shall learn to speak in the voice and the language that God hears. It is the ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning, that prepares for the tongue of the learned, to speak to God as well as men, as should be (Isa. I. 4).

This hearing the voice of God is something more than the thoughtful study of the Word. There may be a study and knowledge of the Word, in which there is but little real fellowship with the living God. But there is also a reading of the Word, in the very presence of the Father, and under the leading of the Spirit, in which the Word comes to us in living power from God Himself; it is to us the very voice of the Father, a real personal fellowship with Himself. It is the living voice of God that enters the heart, that brings blessing and strength, and awakens the response of a living faith that reaches the heart of God again.

It is on this hearing the voice, that the power both to obey and believe depends. The chief thing is, not to know what God has said we must do, but that God Himself says it to us. It is not the law, and not the book, not the knowledge of what is right, that works obedience, but the personal influence of God and His living fellowship. And even so it is not the knowledge of what God has promised, but the presence of God

Himself as the Promiser, that awakens faith and trust in prayer. It is only in the full presence of God that disobedience and unbelief become impossible.

'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.' We see what this means. In the words the Saviour gives Himself. We must have the words in us, taken up into our will and life, reproduced in our disposition and conduct. We must have them abiding in us: our whole life one continued exposition of the words that are within, and filling us; the words revealing Christ within, and our life revealing Him without. It is as the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart and influence Him. My prayer will depend on my life; what God's words are to me and in me, my words will be to God and in God. If I do what God says, God will do what I say.

How well the Old Testament saints understood this connection between God's words and ours, and how really prayer with them was the loving response to what they had heard God speak! If the word were a promise, they counted on God to do as He had spoken. 'Do as Thou hast said;' 'For Thou, Lord, hast spoken it;' 'According to Thy promise;' 'According to Thy word;' in such expressions they showed that what God spake in promise was the root and the life of what they spake in prayer. If the word was a command, they simply did as the Lord had spoken: 'So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken.' Their life was fellowship with God, the interchange of word and thought. What God spoke they heard and did; what they spoke God heard and did. In each word He speaks to us, the whole Christ gives Himself to fulfil it for us. For each word He asks no less that we give the whole man to keep that word, and to receive its fulfilment.

'If my words abide in you;' the condition is simple and clear. In His words His will is revealed. As the words abide in me, His will rules me; my will becomes the empty vessel which His will fills, the willing instrument which His will wields; He fills my inner being. In the exercise of obedience and faith my will becomes ever stronger, and is brought into deeper inner harmony with Him. He can fully trust it to will nothing but what He wills; He is not afraid to give the promise, 'If my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.' To all who believe it, and act upon it, He will make it literally true.

Disciples of Christ! is it not becoming more and more clear to us that while we have been excusing our unanswered prayers, our impotence in prayer, with a fancied submission to God's wisdom and will, the real reason has been that our own feeble life has been the cause of our feeble prayers. Nothing can make strong men but the word coming to us from God's mouth: by that we must live. It is the word of Christ, loved, lived in, abiding in us, becoming through obedience and action part of our being, that makes us one with Christ, that fits us spiritually for touching, for taking hold of God. All that is of the world passeth away; he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. O let us yield heart and life to the words of Christ, the words in which He ever gives HIMSELF, the personal living Saviour, and His promise will be our rich experience: 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!'

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Blessed Lord! Thy lesson this day has again discovered to me my folly. I see how it is that my prayer has not been more believing and prevailing. I was more occupied with my speaking to Thee than Thy speaking to me. I did not understand that the secret of faith is this: there can be only so much faith as there is of the Living Word dwelling in the soul.

And Thy word had taught me so clearly: Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak; let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. Lord, teach me that it is only with Thy word taken up into my life that my words can be taken into Thy heart; that Thy word, if it be a living power within me, will be a living power with Thee; what Thy mouth hath spoken Thy hand will perform.

Lord! deliver me from the uncircumcised ear. Give me the opened ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning to hear the Father's voice. Even as Thou didst only speak what Thou didst hear, may my speaking be the echo of Thy speaking to me. 'When Moses went into the tabernacle to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat.' Lord, may it be so with me too. Let a life and character bearing the one mark, that Thy words abide and are seen in it, be the preparation for the full blessing: 'Ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Amen.

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