

Praying Women

by G.W. North

The sermon highlights the significance of women's prayer meetings in the early church, emphasizing their power to influence decisions and bring about change through prayer and faith.

Duration: 1:13:42

Scripture: Acts 15:1-3, Acts 16:4, Acts 16:6, Acts 16:14-15

Topics: "Women"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of conversation and warns against becoming consumed by screens and losing the ability to converse. He uses the example of Paul and the jailer to illustrate the power of preaching the word of God to bring salvation. The preacher then discusses the concept of coming to Jesus as the bread of life, emphasizing the need to come hungry and thirsty for spiritual nourishment. The sermon concludes with a reference to a prayer meeting by a riverside, highlighting the significance of prayer in the lives of believers.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles open, and having read the story, I want to approach this from a different way than Jane, but nevertheless, something which God showed to me many years ago. If you go back into the fifteenth chapter, you will remember that this is the sixteenth chapter, you will find that the church in chapter fifteen had come to a great crisis in the history of the church. One of the great decisive times arose in verse one of chapter fifteen like this, that certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem and to the apostles and elders about this question. Being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter wrote up and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us that the

Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

And God which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear, but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. I'll go on reading, I think, because it will bring us to the core of it.

Then all the multitude kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. But after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me, Simeon, that's Simon Peter. You will know that the word Simon, I don't know whether you have any sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, I nearly said aunts, and grandfathers, whose name was Simon.

It's really a derivation from the tribe of Simeon, Simon. It doesn't mean to say that they're Israelites, but that's where it comes from. That Simon or Simeon Peter is just saying the tribal name, Simon.

You've named your son with the name of a tribe. Well, all right, we'll leave it at that. And on we go, and we read that Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name, and to this agree the words of the prophets.

As it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore, my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God, but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, surnamed Barsippus, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote letters by them after this manner.

The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. For as much as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words subverting your soul, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment, it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. From which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

All right. I'd like to have read down to the end of the chapter. I suppose you're like me, when you really start reading the Bible, you have a job to leave off.

I don't understand the people who say they don't understand the Bible, but there it is. If they read it enough, they would. You didn't understand algebra when you first read it.

But now, I guess, you read it and now you understand it. That's the way it goes. You didn't understand a cooking recipe, you ladies, when you first read them.

You might have read them when you were about ten, or nine, or eight. But you do now, so you don't need to read them. But if you'd have made the excuse, I can never cook, because I don't understand this recipe, your poor husbands, brothers, fathers, would all have starved to death, unless they'd lived at McDonald's.

But here, then, is the great and wonderful truth for our hearts to lay hold of. Our minds have been drawn to that prayer meeting, which was held every Sabbath day, verse 13 of chapter 16, by a riverside. Prayer was wont to be made there.

And that was a tremendous thing. It was a woman's prayer meeting. All right.

It was a precious thing, too. For, although you may not have thought this before, those women influenced what those men in chapter 15 did. And they influenced entirely by prayer.

They had no say in the matter. It was the elders and the brethren, with the apostles who came together, and they made the great decisions. As a matter of fact, if you'd been to a Bible school or college or something like that, they would have told you this 15th chapter was a great dividing point in Scripture, because at that time, you know, the church, and especially Peter, who was the leader of the church in those days, in the earliest days, a great speaker, they could not conceive that God would save the Gentiles.

That was their first thing. You can read about that in chapter 10. And they thought, they really thought that Jesus Christ was only the Messiah for the Jews.

They didn't think anything else but that. And it was a big pill for Peter to swallow, that the gospel should go to the Gentiles. It really was.

And it just shows you that in the minds of an apostle, there can be tremendous prejudice. And you will know how much this has built up in some minds over the years. And when the Gentiles began to respond, as we read, then they tried to push upon the Gentiles the rights of the ancient Israelites.

You will remember the great problem of circumcision. But I want you to notice, in verse 24 of chapter 15, certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, you see. We gave them no such commandment, he said, and you must always remember that there's a difference between those that go out from you and those who are sent out from you.

That's the thing. John is very clear about this in his first epistle. You know, he said, they went out from us, but they were no part of us.

For if they had been, they would have continued with us. And when people go out, often in the sense of we're going to quit here and we're going off, we don't agree with what's being taught here. Off they went and they began to teach.

They perverted the truth and they began to say, no, you've got to be circumcised, you've got to keep Moses' law, you've got to do this, you've got to do the other. But they were never sent. That's what they were very keen to say.

Now look, we didn't send these people, they just went out from us. They might have been using our name. They might have said, well, we've come from the great church in Antioch, you know, which rapidly was becoming the foremost church in those days.

And it was true in that sense. They had gone out, but they hadn't been sent out as from the central authority to preach the same glorious truth. All right.

And it was a great big decision that the early church made. And it meant that we haven't been brought under the bondage of the old covenant ideas. We've been liberated.

And, of course, in this, as you know, Paul was the great protagonist. He was a great fighter for truth and for reality. Well, that's lovely.

Now, if you read down into chapter 16 now, yes, chapter 16, you find Paul, for the first time, coming across young Timothy. That's in verse 1. All sorts of things happened. And then they went out.

And as they went to the cities, verse 4, they delivered them the decrees that is what had been decided on at this great big meeting. They delivered them the decrees for the keep and were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. So were the churches established in the faith and increase in number daily.

Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they would come to Mycenae, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the spirit suffered them not. And they, passing by Mycenae, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night.

There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracea, and the next day to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.

And we were in that city abiding certain days. And that's the introduction to this group of women. Now, have you ever thought of this? That group of women there in Philippi that used to meet for prayer changed the course of the entire early church.

I want to impress upon you what you precious sisters can do if you will gather together in real prayer with your heart after God. You see, here's this great apostle Paul. It says in verse 6, say, When they went throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, the Holy Ghost forbade them.

Now listen, you are not to preach here, Paul. I suppose Paul must have thought, I wonder what this is all about, you know? Why can't we preach here? The Spirit of God would not let them preach here. And you know, if the Spirit of God won't let you preach, you can't preach the word of God.

You could preach a sermon, but that's not always the same. In fact, in many cases, distinctly different. And then so they had another go.

And they came to Mycenae. And they tried to go to Bithynia, where they would have preached. And the Spirit of God said, No, wouldn't let them go there either.

And I guess those great men of the church, metaphorically, scratched their heads and said, I wonder what this is all about. This is the first time that this has ever happened to us. What's the cause of this? Why can't we do this? Why can't we do that? And they came to Troas in verse 8. And there a vision appeared to Paul, a man of Macedonia praying them to go over.

And they assuredly gathered. When they heard that someone in Macedonia needed help, they didn't say, well, we better go and start a hospital there, I guess, or establish a school. We can't let them go uneducated.

They gathered that God wanted them to go and preach the gospel to them. Priority number one. What a tremendous thing then was happening.

And he still didn't know why. It's an amazing thing, isn't it, that the women were praying, and in the vision, God sent a man to go and ask them, to tell them to come over. And it just shows you what power women have behind men.

You understand this. You women, you have a tremendous power. If you only knew this.

What you can do. It's a tremendous thing to be a husband, as I know, and a father, and a grandfather. But I guess it must be much more tremendous to be a woman, and a wife, and a mother.

I know men that are so influenced by their women folk that they're useless in the church because their wives don't want them to be all out. Their wives demand they stay at home and change their napkins and do something. I've heard some women say, well, I've had him all day, now you have him.

Give me a break, you see. That sort of thing. I want to thank God that I had a wife that let me go.

I wouldn't be here today talking to her if not. That's a tremendous and a glorious thing. God sent a man in the vision.

That's right. Come over, come over and help us, he said. And I guess ultimately Paul came to this conclusion, for it's the conclusion that I've come to, that those women had prayed and God was answering their prayer.

You see. God was answering their prayer. They said, we'll go here to preach.

And they said, no, you don't. Well, we'll go here. And God says, no, you don't.

Well, what's this? I don't understand this. It was because those women were praying, and they got hold of God. Hallelujah.

And God did what they said. I don't suppose they were saying, Lord, send us Paul. Probably they never heard of him.

As has been pointed out to us, this was the great movement of God there in that part of the Gentile world. And what a thing was happening, beloved. I hope the significance of this gets onto your heart.

Lord, we're crying out of Thee. Crying out of Thee. As I say, the 15th chapter is regarded, if you went to a Bible college, as one of the great things.

You know, they make a great fuss about the edict and all this business that went on at Jerusalem and so on and so on. Now fill your heads up with that. But none of them will tell you about what the women did in chapter 16.

They won't tell you that. Oh, you'll hear a sermon about it, hear it too. But it won't be taught to you if you go to a Bible college where they consult the mere academic side of it.

But here's power. They got hold of God. They cried under God from the depths of their need.

And I guess when Paul got to that women's prayer meeting that Sabbath day, and he sat down among them and he saw them, I guess he said, well, this is the reason then. This is the reason. These women came together to pray.

You wouldn't have thought that prayer would have turned a ship away from somewhere else, would you? You wouldn't have thought that a prayer had bound up an apostle so that he couldn't go somewhere. You wouldn't have thought that, would you? No, but it did. It changed the course of the church.

The church would have taken another course. It would have gone through, here it is, we can read it. It would have gone through Asia, but they were forbidden to preach the word in Asia.

Asia, verse 6. Nicaea, no. Bithynia, no. Troas, no.

And these were men who were prepared to go anywhere. They already, as you know, hazarded their lives for Christ. They didn't care.

They were prepared to die for the gospel. They went everywhere and they preached and that was it. But God said, no, that's shut to you.

That's shut to you. No, that's shut to you. What a tremendous thing.

Have you ever seen this? Your power. The things that you can do. You know, there are groups of women that pray.

They're called Lydia groups. I suppose you must have heard that name. You haven't got to link up with anything like that necessarily.

The great thing is, though, to see the potential that you have. Amen. I covet this for you.

I covet it. What's the old saying that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of? Faithful women. It's going to lay hold of God.

They can't dictate to God and say, send us Paul, because they didn't know of Paul. It was an entirely heathen city. But there's this you need to know too.

That it doesn't mean to say that heathen, because they're heathen, aren't seeking God. They are. Lots of them are really seeking God.

They don't know anything different. They don't know that their idols aren't God. But they know beyond all this sort of heathen worship they've been brought up in, they know they're unsatisfied.

They know they haven't really found God. They may want to swear on it that they have, but they know they haven't. Because only God can satisfy the heart.

And you don't find God through idols. Idolatry is sin. So you can't find God by continuing in sin.

What a glorious truth it is for us to know. They spoke to the women. And you remember we read this verse in chapter 15.

Alright? Verse 18 of chapter 15. Known unto God are all his works from the foundation, from the beginning of the world. That's it then.

Known unto God. Now God in his great foreknowledge, foresight, he foresaw a group of women that were going to gather by a riverside. He foresaw it all.

No Paul, you're not to do that. No, you're not to go there, Barnabas either. You're not to do anything like this.

And we might feel what a shame that the door was shut to the gospel. You see. We may feel that.

It wasn't, it spread through there later. But God didn't want it to take that course. He wanted it to take this course.

Isn't it a wonderful thing to pray unto the will of God? You know, what you must not do is come together and pray unto your own mind. Pray unto your own soul this or something that. It's coming together to let the spirit of God get hold of you.

And you know these people were absolutely in earnest. Couldn't have been easy for these women to gather for prayer. They had some knowledge of the Lord.

Verse 14 of chapter 16. This woman was a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshipped God. Worship.

There are lots of people, you know, who worship God in some way or another. You do know, of course, don't you, that the distinctive thing about the gospel comes out very markedly here. You know, as you know, I, most of you know anyway, I travel in other lands.

And I see temples, mosques. I see all kinds of places where people gather to worship. If you were born in a heathen nation, you would have been trained to worship.

If you were Chinese, for instance, having lately come back from preaching to Chinese. If you were Chinese, you would have been brought up in Taoism to worship your ancestors. This is why you always find the Chinese people most polite.

You'll never find the Chinese people anything else but polite. They are polite to their elders. It comes in their religion.

I wish the politeness was here in Christianity. But here is the thing. So from infancy they would have been trained to go along to the temple.

And they would have been taught to worship. Worship. Worship.

It doesn't matter where you go, you'll find all these nations have worship. They worship the Buddha. They worship all kinds of grotesque things in Hinduism.

They worship their ancestors in Taoism and in Confucianism. And all these other things. They worship in Sikhism.

You can go through them all. Everybody is trained to worship. Now the distinctive feature of the Gospel is that it doesn't teach an alternative form of worship.

It preaches salvation. That's it. That's the thing you've got to get hold of.

This is the thing that makes it different from everything else. They can go to ashrams. They can squat in the lotus leaf position and try to find worship and peace.

But they don't find salvation. The distinctive thing is salvation. Amen.

You must be saved, not just taught to worship. Worship will come after that, when you're saved. You know, there is a sort of sense in what Karl Marx said.

He said, of course, that man is a religious animal. Of course, he's all wrong. Of course.

But there's something in what he said. We must worship something. Something.

Something. People say they don't worship anything. They don't know what worship is.

That's why. They mean we don't get together in a crowd, call it a church or something like that, and say prayers and sing hymns. Everybody has to worship something.

You do know that, don't you? Yeah. Something which is greater than self. What a tremendous thing it is.

It may be based on all kinds of wrong reasons and manifest itself in wrong practices, but nevertheless, it's the truth. They were meeting and worshipping. She was worshipping and wasn't a Christian.

That's the thing. She was worshipping in the limited sense in which people worship. And, you know, until you're radically saved, you always worship in a limited sense.

Always. You know, one of the great things about worship, one of the words is to kiss the hand. And another word is to kiss the hand toward.

This is the meaning of the Greek word. You know, you go to somebody and you pick up their hand and you kiss it. Or you kiss the hand toward.

You know, it's rather like this. There are lots of people like that. I hope you're not like that.

Even if you're intending in your mind and thought at the time to worship the one true and living God, I hope you're not like that. All the heathen were like this, you know, in the early world. They still are.

You remember Paul went, in the later chapter it records, he went to Athens. And he saw that the place was absolutely full of idols. And, you know, some wonderful things can come from idolaters and people that do worship.

You know that, don't you? I mean, all the groundwork of all philosophy is based on the great Greek philosophers. They worshipped God in their way. They worshipped their idols in their way.

The great profound sayings of philosophy, they aren't all modern. They're still based on the old Platonic school. Plato, before Christ, they were worshipping.

Let's get it in our hearts. And some of you people have to handle younger people, young children. You must teach them that they've got to be saved from sin.

Not just try and bring them into worship. You must understand that. You've got to teach them salvation.

No better way to teach it than be saved yourselves. Oh, Paul said, we knew when we saw this vision that we've got to go and preach the gospel to them. He didn't say, now look, let me take you by the hand and teach you a better way of worshipping.

This woman, as we read in verse 14, this certain woman, it says of her, she worshipped God, but she heard us, and then the Lord opened her heart. People are worshipping the Lord with a closed heart. You know what you'll do? A closed up heart of you, it's all closed.

And you use such words as, I can't get free. And you look at somebody else who perhaps you think is free or is supposed to be free, and you have a sort of a slight envy inside, if not a very, very big one. I mean, I've heard people say, I hated you.

You represented all I haven't got and all I wanted. You see? It's amazing how hatred can spring up between a closed heart and a heart that's open. Jealousy, envy, hatred.

Well, if you listen to God, if you will first open your heart, you must do the first part, and listen to God and say, oh God, what you say to me I'll receive. I'll not fight you. I'll not deny it.

I was at a meeting not so long ago, preaching. And after I'd finished, a young girl, I don't know how old she would be, and when I ought to stop calling people women girls, but I'm old enough to do that to most of you in this room, I guess. She came up to me afterwards, where would she be? She'd probably be in her late teens, possibly early twenties.

She said, I didn't accept a word you said. Well, I'd been preaching for an hour and a half, so she'd gone on for an hour and a half's unacceptance. All right.

And the reason was that I'd preached stuff that she didn't believe, you see. She was among a group where you can just sort of do as you like. You just believe in Jesus, and oh, you'll go to heaven, you see, and all this.

And up came the hardness. You're a hard preacher, she said. Well, that's rather surprising, because most people tell me I'm not.

You know, but that's what she said. Because her heart was closed against it, you know, and you can close your heart. See, and it's like me throwing my Bible up against this wall, it'll bounce off.

Whose heart the Lord opened. Hallelujah, what a marvelous thing. And he'll open your heart by the power of the Spirit as you listen to the Word.

If you come listening aright, that's the way it happens. You know, people, they're not right in the way they go to meetings, even. They just aren't right.

And they aren't right in the way they believe, you see. Because endemic in the word believe in Scripture is this. You can take the exchange words.

Turn with me for a moment. Keep your finger in there, because we're coming back. Turn with me to John chapter 6. I think you see this very clearly.

It's the feeding of the 5,000, you remember. And after the Lord had fed the 5,000, he speaks to some people about it. And this is what he said.

Verse 35 of chapter 6. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger. And he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

So you say, well there it is. He said if you believe, it's okay. If you come.

But you see, you've got to come to Jesus as the bread of life. You've got to come hungry. So when it says, come unto me, you've got to come as a hungry person that must eat to live.

It's got to be a vital thing with you. It's got to be something that says, I must. Not, I'll just go along and meet him.

Or something like that. Or, if you believe on me, you'll never thirst. That means you've got to come.

And believing in you, you've got to come unto him as the living waters. And you're coming to drink because you're driven by a tremendous thirst. Believing other than that is a waste of time.

It's just a mental exercise. It's got to be, ah me, I'm dying of hunger. Ah, I'm dying of thirst.

Jesus, I come to you. That's the way it's got to be. That is innate in the fact of believing.

But we've pulled it down to just, well yeah, I believe there, and I believe there. Like I believe there's a North Pole and a South Pole. But if I went there, I wouldn't see the poles.

So whatever are they talking about? But when you come to Jesus, you don't go academically or merely scientifically. You go because you're in desperate need. Unless you can never believe right.

That's the answer. It's the simple answer. Go back into Acts 16.

Everybody by that woman's, by that riverside, was a believer. But if you'd said, who do you believe in? They'd say, well we believe in God. We believe we must, we should worship God.

And if you say then, well what else do you believe in? They'd say, well we believe in prayer. You see. That's what they would have said.

But if you ask a heathen, they'll say that. We believe in God. We believe we should worship.

We believe we should pray. Hmm. God opened her heart.

God opened her heart. When she was baptized. Now, there's no talk about baptism.

Paul didn't say, now you've got to be baptized. And her household. She was sort of saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.

And she constrained us. Amen. If you judge me to be faithful.

You know, that is what God's requiring of each one of you. God is requiring that you be faithful. Look, they met.

They didn't know the true God. They didn't know him. They met to pray.

They met to worship. They met to do all sorts of things. And God had been faithful to them.

He'd been faithful to them. He'd said, no, not there, not there, not there. There's this group of women here.

They're praying. And you ought to go to them, Paul. He'd been faithful to them.

Now God is expecting you to be faithful to him. That's what he's expecting. To be faithful to him.

You won't need me to expand on the word faithful. You know what it means. To be faithful.

Isn't it a tragedy that you'll hear this word sometimes spoken about dogs. No, he's a faithful old dog. And you can think back, and sometimes you might say, and perhaps there may be some bitterness, and you might say, more faithful than this man or this woman.

What a tragedy. That the sort of thing that men call faithfulness can be in an animal. And men and women, unfaithful, you know where that attaches in human relationships, don't you? You don't need me to expand the thought.

Now God is wanting you to be faithful to him. If he's being faithful to you, how about you being faithful to him? Above all other relationships, faithful to him. Surely if he's God, that's what it's all about, isn't it? Being faithful to him.

If God has opened your heart to come to a knowledge of himself, if he has been faithful to you, to tell you the truth, Lord, I want to be faithful to thee. That's it. It's what he wants.

Are you? Faithful to him. Now she judged faithfulness to him. Well, that hadn't been mentioned.

She was saying, well, here we are, we're right by the river. Baptize me, Paul. She counted that to be part of her faithfulness.

No holding back, no messing about. Here's the river. I wish I'd been in on their meeting.

I guess I would have used the river as an illustration of what I wanted to say. And you all know that Paul never missed an opportunity. So I guess perhaps he did.

I'll ask him one day when I see him. I'm going to see him, you know. I don't know where you're going when you die, but I know where I'm going.

I'm going amongst these spirits of just men made perfect that you read about in the Bible. It's going to be marvelous. I mean, you can start asking way back with Abraham.

You can have eternity of pass by, you know. You'll never get bored. You won't need a television or anything like that.

Because why? Why would you need that? You can start with Abraham and ask him all about what happened. You can go on to Isaac and Jacob and you can go to Moses. Keep on conversations.

Don't lose the art of conversation, will you, by being gummed to a television set. Lots of people, conversations dropped out of their hole. They can't converse.

They always listen to what some, I nearly said idiot, excuse me, is saying on a screen. So they gradually become dumb. Oh, what a tremendous thing it is.

I'm going to ask Paul. Lots of people, conversations dropped out of their hole. They can't converse.

They always listen to what some, I nearly said idiot, excuse me, is saying on a screen. So they gradually become dumb. Oh, what a tremendous thing it is.

I'm going to ask Paul whether he uses rivers as an illustration. Because I'm sure I would have done. You know, you drink of this river.

Now, God wants you to drink of him. His spirit is flowing like a river. You know, you've seen the chorus, don't you? Love is flowing like a river.

Peace is flowing like a river. Joy is flowing like a river. I guess he did.

I would have done. But here is the marvelous thing. I want to be baptized, Paul.

Do you judge me to be faithful? You can't be much more faithful than that in the beginning. That you receive with open heart. And you move with instantaneous faith.

You'll always know when your heart is really open, you'll move with faith. It's the open heart that moves with faith. But when the heart's all shut up, it can't move with faith.

It's crippled. It's confined. It can't move.

Oh, Lord. She moved right in. And God met her.

And then she did the thing that she could do. Offered hospitality. Amen.

It's a great virtue amongst women to offer hospitality. I know too many women who only want me, my husband and my little family. And we're going to shut the rest of the world out and let the rest of the world go by.

Or something like that. And their home becomes a sort of a little island in the sea of humanity. There is that which is right about the proper home.

But she opened up straight away. She said, you come right in here. You come right in here.

You know, I can remember right back to my youth. In the little chapel that I used to go to in Kent. The leader was a very fine artist.

And he used to paint models, pictures of models, It was long before this sort of flannel graph thing came into view, into the line. And he used to take his children's meetings. I was still counted as a child, I suppose.

And I can remember him doing his models and pictures on the walls. It was a great impression. And one of the impressions he made on me, he spoke about this Lydia one.

And he said that Lydia, being an artist, you know, he said, you know, she sold purple. And purple is made up of red and blue. And he was great on colours.

He used to expound the colours of the rainbow, for instance. You know what the seven colours of the rainbow are. Each one stands for something of the character of God and of the nature of God.

And he used to say, red and blue. Blue is the colour of heavenly love, like the blue sky above us, you see. And red, of course, is the colour of redemption, in the love of God.

He redeemed us through the blood of his son. And red and blue put together is the colour of royalty. Oh, he used to bring out all these kinds of points.

And I benefited much from his artistry in my early days. And that's what this woman was. She used to dye cloth, I don't know whether she wove it or whatever she did, she would dye it purple.

And she used to sell it. This was the way she made her livelihood. She may possibly have been a widow woman.

But she wanted God. She wanted God. Amen.

And you know, if deeper down in you, and overriding everything else in you, there is this great desire for God, I want to tell you that God will open your heart too. He'll open it. See, too many people want God when, say, their life is in a mess, or say they find their husbands going off with some other woman or something.

Then they want to use God to get their husband back. I know it because they've come to me in their tens, not all at once. They've come to me in their hundreds over the years, and that's all they want.

They only want you to pray for them to get their husband back, or something like that. It's not a bad thing to get your husband back. I mean, please, I'm not saying that's wrong.

In some cases it might be the worst thing, but I don't really know. But generally speaking, it's a good thing, you see. So they're wanting you to use God.

Lots of people want to get healed. If they hear that you pray for the sick, they only want to get healed so that they can go about and do what they want to do. They don't want God.

Isn't this tragic, really? Now, God wants you to be faithful to Him. I don't know whether you're at issue with God on the matter of baptism, for instance. I don't know.

There's a baptistry there, by the way, under that law, I guess. But whatever the issue is, a story comes to mind. It's about a woman, too.

A great friend of mine, a true story, or an incident rather than a story. It wasn't told as a story, though I heard it in story form, actually. I wasn't there when it happened.

A friend of mine used to move about in Kent and Sussex with a tent. He used to pitch it in villages. He belonged to the caravan mission to village children.

You may have heard of it. He used to just move around. I remember when he came to the village where I lived in Kent at that time and he pitched his tent and my father-in-law got saved.

That was a great occasion. He told me of an incident that he pitched his tent in some place and during the course of it, a lady came along with a goiter to the meeting. A huge goiter.

She sought prayer for healing. He prayed with her and the goiter disappeared. All right.

He went back to that village about two years afterwards and lo and behold, there was the woman with the goiter. Again, got the goiter. He said, I couldn't understand this.

I had a chat with her. He said, while I was speaking, it was drawn to my heart to say to her, is there a controversy between you and God? After a while, she said, yes. What is it? He said, baptism.

I won't be baptized. I was sprinkled when I was a baby and all this. She went right through it.

All the arguments we've heard through the years, of course, they never vary. They're always the same. God spoke to me about baptism and I wouldn't.

But I want you to pray with me. He said, no, I won't. You don't get the controversy cleared up between your heart and God.

Don't ask me to pray for you. You see, you mustn't come to God to use him for your convenience. He loves to bless.

He does all this kind of thing. But please believe he's God. Please believe he's the everlasting king.

Please believe you're moving in the area of heavenly blessings and so on and so on and so on. And please remember this, will you? We're turning into chapter 15. I'm looking at verse 14.

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. So when the Lord speaks to you and says to you, he's come to take you out from among the Gentiles and put you in the people that he calls the church. Amen.

And from that moment you are a separated person unto God. He is your God. And you are one of his people.

Whatever you say or think, the church is an exclusive body. Anybody can attend any place of worship. Anybody.

The public can come in, go out. They can do all sorts of things. The tide of humanity can flow through the buildings.

But it's not that we're talking about. The true church of Jesus Christ, a company that has their hearts opened by God. They receive the truth of the gospel.

They become faithful to God and God takes them out from among the Gentiles or the Jews or whatever it is. And they become an exclusive people belonging to God. The claims of God are paramount and they are to be regarded as being superior to any other claim in the universe.

Because this woman saw that, she went, I'm going to be faithful to God. And look, if a group of faithful people, faithful to God, gather together and see the potential in prayer, a group of praying women in a church can move a church. It moved the whole of it, the whole course of the early church in the beginning.

The men all met in the conference in Jerusalem and said, we're going to do this. And the women said, we're going to pray about this. Hallelujah.

Never altered the decision that was made in Jerusalem. You mustn't try and do that. But here's the thing.

Lord, Lord, cry out unto God. Cry out unto God. I can remember a time in my life when I was pastor in a church in the north of England.

We just got together and cried out unto God. We didn't know what was going to happen, but God poured out the Spirit. We didn't try and tell God what to do.

We just went and cried out to God. When your heart's like that, you don't even know what you're praying about. You're not trying to use God at all.

But this great hunger and thirst inside for God, anyhow, anyway, under any conditions, that's the thing. The trouble with most people is they try to condition God to their own mind when they're praying. We want you to do this.

We want you to do that. We want you to do something else. Instead of recognizing first that it's got to be a basic hunger, that it's got to be basic in us.

When people refuse to act by that basic instinct in them, that's when things come a cropper. We've all been babies, so I won't say if you've ever been a baby, but I don't know whether you've had babies or you know all about babies anyway. I guess I'm the only male here, so I guess you women know all there is to know between you about it.

But you know that when that baby's born, built into it is an instinct for hunger. You wouldn't be able to say, Mommy, I'm hungry. But instinctive in it, in that little thing, hunger and thirst is there.

That's part of being born of God. If the hunger and thirst isn't there, you've never been born of God. Every baby is born with hunger and thirst as being natural to it, though it can't even explain it.

It's inbuilt. And it's a receptive thing, this hunger. I must get food.

It's a receptive thing, this thirst. I must get thirst. I must get that thirst satisfied.

It's milk, of course. It doesn't know, though. It wouldn't know whether it was milk.

If you told it it was champagne, it wouldn't know. Don't you understand this? It's got to be in us. Lord.

Oh, God. I'm talking now for what I know, because that's how it happened with me and the people with whom I met. They left everything and got to God.

God poured out his Spirit. And I don't know whether you realize this or not, that you're in this room today because of that that happened in those years back. Although you may not have known anything about me, and it wouldn't have mattered whether you did or whether you didn't, you are here today because of that.

Peter and Jane were because of that. They weren't at that place, but they came in as a result of what came from it. And so it passes on.

And so it passes on. And you see what you can do. Amen.

Now, I suppose I'd better soon stop. All I want to do now is draw a contrast. And the contrast is still in that 16th chapter.

In verse 16. It came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel, oh, what a difference, a different woman this time, possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her master's much gain by soothsaying. What a word that is, soothsaying.

You know, that's right. If you go to these witches and fortune tellers, they always tell you soothing things. You're going to meet a dark, handsome young man, and you're going to live to be 95, and you see all this sort of thing.

Soothsaying. They never tell you anything awful. They never tell you anything that would really upset you, like the gospel might have upset you the first time you heard it.

God doesn't go in for soothsaying. He tells us the stark, naked truth. And often we don't like it.

But anyway, you know this happened. She followed Paul, verse 17, and us. So there was more than Luke.

It was said that Luke, well, it was certainly Luke. He was there at Philippi, and Luke wrote this gospel, this Acts of the Apostles. And it was more than Luke, too.

Obviously, there was quite a company of people. Timothy was there, for one thing, and so on. There was a company.

And they said, she said, These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this she did many days. Paul was grieved, and he turned and said to the Spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ, come out.

He came out the same hour. What a difference. Here's a woman.

If you read down the story, you will find that she was a slave of some men who were using her. She had the spirit of Divinesh. If you read the Margin, if you have a good Margin or Reference Bible, you will find she had the spirit of Python.

That's the name of the spirit that was in her. She was not a snake. She was a woman that swallowed up.

You know what pythons do? They attach themselves to a tree and they crush their victims before they eat them like a boa constrictor. They do the same kinds of things. And that's what this woman was doing.

It described her absolutely perfectly. The spirit of Python. But Paul wasn't going to be caught in her coils.

She did it many days. He didn't cut her down right at the beginning. When she kept on doing it, he dealt with the spirit that was in her.

What kind of a spirit have you got in you? I'm not asking whether you've got some spirit of Python in you, but take Lydia's lovely spirit and take this girl. Lydia was following an honorable course. She was a seller of purple.

Here's a girl that was sold out to men who were using her for their own gain. I trust there's nobody like that. I trust we're all like Lydia here today.

Lord, you've been faithful to me. I want to be faithful to you. For the rest of my days, Lord, someone, it may be that you've been a worshipper of God, but with your heart closed up, really.

You don't really know the liberty of those who are abandoned in uttermost love to the Lord Jesus. I don't know. But that's what God wants.

A heart that says, anything you say, Lord, I'm going to do it. If you want to get into the place of liberty, take all the constrictions off your own mind. Say, oh, I wouldn't do that.

Oh, no, I don't want to get involved in that. Oh, I don't want my husband in it. Either come back.

I'll make it difficult for you in the home if you give yourself up. You don't say that to him. No.

One that says, Lord, anything for you. I tell you, marriage, my precious sisters, is not for you to consume a husband upon yourself and the babies you want to have. It's for you to know.

God grant that it be together with your husband and you do it together. I want to be faithful to you, Lord. I'll ask you a question.

Why should God be faithful to you if you don't intend to be faithful to him? Why should he be? He's not your God. He's willing to be. You mustn't think that God's the God of everybody.

He isn't. You won't need me to tell you that this book tells you and Jesus says it, that the devil is the God of this world and he's not everybody's God that's in this world. That's the great thing.

Why should he be faithful to you above his faithfulness, say, in giving you sunshine and rain and harvest and springtime? Why should he be? He's given you everything absolutely fair, equal with everybody else in this respect. If you want the special things from God, you must come especially to him and open your heart in a very real and wonderful way if you want these things. And that's what these women were doing so far as they could.

God saw that they were being real and he sent his servant to them. Assure, as you're real, whoever you are, God will do that. Amen.

It's his nature to be. The contrast, well, this unnamed girl. I'm very glad her name wasn't put in.

God does do that. He leaves out, often, the names of those that were wrong. For instance, a woman at the well, a woman taking an adultery.

But when there's a woman that comes right through, Lydia, you see. Martha, Mary, people that came right through to God. How do you take it on the men's side? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, people that

came right through to God.

The others? It isn't because he doesn't love them. It isn't because he doesn't want to do it. But God knows our hearts right deep down inside.

Hallelujah. Let me encourage you then. It would be a wonderful thing if there was a band of women here in Worthy that could really move the hand of God.

And really turn things to God's glory. So that Philippi became the first of these great cities, as they were called and thought great in those days, compared with the tiny little hamlets. The gospel came there.

Amen. The work of God was done. And you will know that the second person spoken of as being saved by the gospel in Philippi, that's really the way we should say it, by the way, was a jailer.

To get him saved, Paul had to be slung into prison and be thrashed and beaten. But he was a woman. To get her saved, all he needed to do was to preach to her the word of God.

Why don't you be like that? Amen. Now let's pray, shall we? Thank you, Father, for this great and marvelous gospel. Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful truth of it.

Oh, Lord, it's wonderful to the extreme that that group of women could change the course of events in the early church so radically. Now, Father, grant, I pray thee, that among these precious women here there shall come forth a band of women that can move heaven and the arm of God and move the devil and move the hand of men. Lord, we do glory in this.

We praise thee, Father. We don't have to be any special kind of people, but just people who know their God and are faithful to God. Oh, Lord, take us away from the deadly subtlety of just being faithful to ourselves and faithful to our little family or group.

Take us into that place, Lord, where we are faithful to thee through and through. Though miracles may be wrought in the affairs of the church and in the affairs of the world, for thy glory. But don't do it now, because we're just going home.

Listen. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. Now, do the faithful thing right now.

That's the thing. With that woman it was, I'm going to get baptized. Okay, that was the faithful thing.

She didn't have to move a mountain. She didn't have to say, oh, I've got to give away half a million pounds or something in faith. She just did the simple, faithful thing.

Now, if you are faithful in that little thing, God counts it as though you're faithful to move a mountain, you see. It's the same. He doesn't say, if you're faithful in that which is little, you will be faithful in that which is much.

He says it's the same. It's the principle of acting in faithfulness, that's all. Whether it be little or much.

Now, do the next or the immediate, even little thing. Be faithful, and you'll find that life becomes a series of taking steps of faithfulness. Amen.

Glory. Open your heart. Praise God.

Don't try and move the sun out of the sky. Do the faithful thing, and the Lord will seal it all up in your heart.
Thank you, Jane.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27186.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gw-north/praying-women/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net