

Pray Unceasingly

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praying unceasingly with joy and thanksgiving, without limitations, and with perseverance, as a means of honoring God and living a life that pleases Him.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Timothy 2:8, Hebrews 4:16

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the exceeding grace of God's thoughts towards His beloved Son before time began, urging believers to rejoice in God's purpose of love in Christ and to pray with perseverance, joy, and thanksgiving. He warns against the subtlety of Satan in causing believers to become careless in their prayer life, emphasizing the importance of praying in the Spirit for all saints, all men, and in all places. Vine encourages believers to be encouraged in unceasing and persevering prayer, reminding them of the perfect and invincible armor provided by God.

Transcript

God has graciously unfolded to us the wonderful thoughts that filled His heart concerning His beloved Son before the ages of time began to roll. What exceeding grace is this, and what cause we have, in consequence, to lift up our hearts in joyful praise to Him!

A steady, strong saint of God is one who values this. He greatly rejoices in the purpose of God's love in Christ. He knows that "the purpose of God according to election" must stand, and stand firmly; it cannot be moved. He also knows most surely that that purpose, so quickly ripening, will very soon be publicly manifested in great glory, fruitful to God's eternal praise, and he presses forward to that day.

Pray with all Perseverance

In connection with this, however, we need to be on our guard against a Satanic subtlety which ensnares the minds of many in regard to prayer, stealthily steals into the unwatchful Carelessness as to persevering prayer. A kind of fatalism creeps into the spirit, into the believer's heart. Cold correctness in terms and expressions may remain, and the truth of the Epistle to the Ephesians, that God works all things after the counsel of His own will, still be spoken of. Nevertheless, prayer becomes dull, formal, and selfishly narrow, lacking fervency, frequency, sympathy, and intelligent urgency. But the significant fact should be carefully noticed that it is in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the eternal purpose of God is spoken of, that we

are warned in this very connection of the devil's artifices. Praying in the Spirit "with all perseverance," as well as at "all seasons," is enjoined at the end of it, crowning a sevenfold list of invincible armour pieces, for preservation practically, in the present struggle (chap. 6).

It should also be remarked it is for "all the saints" that prayer is to be made. This will preserve us from a sectarian or party spirit, which is so fatal to the saintly warrior. We are also here told to pray that the "mystery of the gospel" may be boldly told out; and thus we shall be maintained in heart and mind with God in communion about both; and kept back from the selfish and hurtful narrowness which has so effectually enfeebled numbers of Christian soldiers. Boldness is indeed needed, for in its final issue, although the mystery of the glad tidings makes known an order of marvellous blessedness, it involves the eventual overthrow of the present system of nations. We may therefore well be told to pray with all perseverance.

Pray with Joy and Thanksgiving

It is also clear that prayer should not be despondent. It is to be persevering truly, yet to bring in a tone of despondency is to dishonour the One from whom we rightly expect. Paul spoke of "making request with joy." This may well be the case with us also, knowing the all-sufficiency of our blessed God and Father upon whom we are happily dependent. He is able to do far exceedingly above all our asking, or even our thinking. Colossians 4:2 likewise tells us to "persevere in prayer," but at the same time adding, "watch in the same with thanksgiving." As we think of the grace and greatness of God our Father, we have good reason to pray with joy and with thanksgiving; yea, in all things to give thanks.

How grateful, too, it is to Him who loves us to see our hearts thus turning to Himself. He observes His own with divine interest and pleasure as they are journeying heavenward.

Sitting one day in a café I saw a young convert enter accompanied by two relatives. I knew of him, but he did not know me. I wondered if he would give thanks to God for his meal. I felt keenly for him. Young in the faith and surrounded by worldlings, I knew he would need to have divine courage. I was filled with joy as I saw him bow his head and give thanks to God. He had no idea that a sympathetic stranger was observing him; but how encouraging it is for us to know that our God and Father Himself lovingly observes His own, and values the prayers and thanksgivings and praises that rise from their hearts.

No Limitations

Many impose limitations as to prayer where God does not. We are to be always in the spirit of prayer, for we are exhorted to "pray unceasingly." When we are thus characterized, our conduct and conversation, whilst always with grace, would be such that we could at once turn happily and reverently to God in prayer and speak freely to Him. The two short verses of 1 Thessalonians 5 are of immense importance, "Rejoice evermore. Pray unceasingly." Prayer and joy travel happily together, hand in hand along the path of faith to the heavenly goal on high.

"Preserve me, O God," our Lord Jesus Christ prayed as He trod the path; but He added, "My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth." He saw also the goal before Him and continued, "Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16). We learn in Him who knew the purpose of God so intimately the importance of prayer.

Limitations as to place are also sometimes made, but in 1 Timothy 2:8 we read that men should "pray in every place," whilst verse 1 exhorts that "all men" should be remembered; for our Saviour God desires that "all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." The risen Man Christ Jesus, who once gave Himself a ransom for all, being now the one Mediator, the only Mediator of God and men. Prayer and thanksgiving is consequently to mark us for all men in every place.

Encouraged in Prayer

May it be ours to be encouraged by these scriptures in unceasing and persevering prayer; and may we make happy and intelligent progress in the same through the knowledge of our God and Father, from whom we may well ask with joy and confidence. There is no need to be discouraged. His resources are inexhaustible, and the armour provided is perfect and invincible. (1) The girdle of truth. (2) The breastplate of righteousness. (3) The preparation of the gospel of peace. (4) The shield of faith. (5) The helmet of salvation. (6) The sword of the Spirit, God's Word. (7) PRAYER.

Our God is the "God of all encouragement," as well as "the Father of compassions;" therefore, if we have been ensnared, or become careless, we can wake up now and give ourselves to prayer in the Spirit:

"WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE;"

"AT ALL SEASONS;"

"FOR ALL THE SAINTS;"

"FOR ALL MEN;"

"AND IN ALL PLACES."

Very soon God's purpose in Christ of everlasting glory will be seen bursting forth in beauty and splendour, brightening all with its blessed beams. To that gladsome time we are hastening onward; and now, if we would run well and worthily, prayer in the Spirit must be the breath which constantly and inspiringly fills the lungs of our souls: making us speed forward, superior to mundane and Satanic influences; giving us wing for flight and joyful communion with God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ on the journey.

"Haste thee on from grace to glory,

Armed by faith, and winged by prayer,

Heaven's eternal day's before thee

God's right hand shall bring thee there."

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