

Expository Thoughts on Mark - Mark 7:24-30

by J.C. Ryle

J.C. Ryle's sermon emphasizes the power of intercessory prayer, urging believers to persist in praying for others, especially their children, regardless of circumstances.

Scripture: Mark 7:29, James 5:16

Topics: "Intercessory Prayer", "Perseverance in Prayer"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the power and importance of intercessory prayer through the story of a Gentile woman who persistently sought Jesus to heal her daughter possessed by an unclean spirit. Despite initial discouragement, her unwavering faith and determination in prayer led to her daughter's healing, illustrating that prayer can bring hope even in desperate situations. Ryle encourages parents to pray for their children, reminding them that while they cannot control their children's hearts, they can always intercede on their behalf. He stresses the necessity of perseverance in prayer, urging believers to continue praying for others, regardless of the apparent lack of immediate results. Ultimately, Ryle concludes that intercessory prayer is a profound act of love and kindness that can lead to significant spiritual breakthroughs.

Transcript

WE know nothing of the woman, who is here mentioned, beyond the facts that we here read. Her name, her former history, the way in which she was led to seek our Lord, though a Gentile, and dwelling in the borders of Tyre and Sidon,-all these things are hidden from us. But the few facts that are related about this woman are full of precious instruction. Let us observe them, and learn wisdom.

In the first place, this passage is meant to encourage us to pray for others. The woman who came to our Lord, in the history now before us, must doubtless have been in deep afflictions. She saw a beloved child possessed by an unclean spirit. She saw her in a condition in which no teaching could reach the mind, and no medicine could heal the body,-a condition only one degree better than death itself. She hears of Jesus, and beseeches Him to "cast forth the devil out of her daughter." She prays for one who could not pray for herself, and never rests till her prayer is granted. By prayer she obtains the cure which no human means could obtain. Through the prayer of the mother, the daughter is healed. On her own behalf that daughter did -not speak a word; but her mother spoke for her to the Lord, and did not speak in vain. Hopeless and desperate as her case appeared, she had a praying mother, and where there is a praying mother there is always hope.

The truth here taught is one of deep importance. The case here recorded is one that does not stand alone. Few duties are so strongly recommended by Scriptural example, as the duty of intercessory prayer. There is a long catalogue of instances in Scripture, which show the benefits that may be conferred on others by praying for them. The nobleman's son at Capernaum,-the centurion's servant,-the daughter of Jairus, are all striking examples. Wonderful as it may seem, God is pleased to do great things for souls, when friends and relations are moved to pray for them. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James v. 16.)

Fathers and mothers are especially bound to remember the ease of this woman. They cannot give their children now hearts. They can give them Christian education, and show them the way of life; but they cannot give them a will to choose Christ's service, and a mind to love God. Yet there is one thing they can always do;-they can pray for them. They can pray for the conversion of profligate sons, who will have their own way, and run greedily into sin. They can pray for the conversion of worldly daughters, who set their affections on things below, and love pleasure more than God. Such prayers are heard on high. Such prayers will often bring down blessings. Never, never let us forget that the children for whom many prayers have been offered, seldom finally perish. Let us pray more for our sons and daughters. Even when they will not let us speak to them about religion, they cannot prevent us speaking for them to God.

In the second place, this passage is meant to teach us to persevere in praying for others. The woman whose history we are now reading, appeared at first to obtain nothing by her application to our Lord. On the contrary, our Lord's reply was discouraging. Yet she did not give up in despair. She prayed on, and did not faint. She pressed her suit with ingenious arguments. She would take no refusal. She pleaded for a few "crumbs" of mercy, rather than none at all. And through this holy importunity she succeeded. She heard at last these joyful words: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

Perseverance in prayer is a point of great moment. Our hearts are apt to become cool and indifferent, and to think that it is no use to draw near to God. our hands soon hang down, and our knees wax faint. Satan is ever labouring to draw us off from our prayers, and filling our minds with reasons why we may give them up.-These things are true with respect to all prayers, but they are especially true with respect to intercessory prayer. It is always far more meager than it ought to be. It is often attempted for a little season, and then left of. We see no immediate answer to our prayers. We see the persons for whose souls we pray, going on still in sin. We draw the conclusion that it is useless to pray for them, and allow our intercession to come to an end.

Do we know what it is to pray for ourselves? This, after all, is the first question for self-inquiry. The man who never speaks to God about his own soul, can know nothing of praying for others. He is as yet Godless, Christless, and hopeless, and has to learn the very rudiments of religion. Let him awake, and call upon God.

But do we pray for ourselves? Then let us take heed that we pray for others also. Let us beware of selfish prayers,-prayers which are wholly taken up with our own affairs, and in which there is no place for other souls beside our own. Let us name all whom we love before God continually. Let us pray for all,-the worst, the hardest, and the most -unbelieving. Let us continue praying for them year after year, in spite of their continued unbelief. God's time of mercy may be a distant one. Our eyes may not see an answer to our intercessions. The answer may not come for ten, fifteen, or twenty years. It may not come till we have exchanged prayer for praise, and are far away from this world. But while we live, let us pray for others. It is the greatest kindness we can do to any one, to speak for him to our Lord Jesus Christ. The day of

judgment will show that one of the greatest links in drawing some souls to God, has been the intercessory prayer of friends.

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