

The Bible in the Prayer-Closet.

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller emphasizes the essential relationship between prayer and Bible reading for a fulfilling spiritual life.

Scripture: Psalm 19:7-8, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 4:4, John 15:7, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 6:17, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22

Topics: "Prayer", "Importance of Scripture"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the vital connection between prayer and Scripture reading in the life of a believer. He argues that while prayer is essential for spiritual nourishment, it is incomplete without the Word of God, which provides guidance, comfort, and strength. Miller illustrates that just as Jesus used Scripture to combat temptation, believers must also equip themselves with God's Word to navigate life's challenges. He encourages Christians to not only pray but to also immerse themselves in the Bible, ensuring they are spiritually fortified for their daily struggles. Ultimately, Miller asserts that true spiritual feeding requires both prayer and the Scriptures.

Transcript

We are continually reminded of the necessity for secret prayer. We are taught that we should both begin and end each busy day at the Master's feet. This is all very well. Not a word too much can be said on the importance of prayer. We cannot live a spiritual life at all, unless we draw inspiration down from Heaven. In our life in this world of evil and struggle, we are like divers working on board a sunken ship beneath the waves of the sea; we can maintain our life and continue our work, only by keeping unbroken communication with Heaven, and by breathing Heaven's air.

But it is a mistake to suppose that prayer alone is sufficient to nourish our spiritual life. It is just as needful to have God talk to us -- as it is for us to talk to him. Yet we are not exhorted in books and sermons half so frequently or half so earnestly to read our Bible, as part of our daily spiritual feeding, as we are to pray.

There are many people who rarely carry the Bible with them in to their prayer-closet. They drop on their knees for a few hurried moments in the morning, and implore God's blessing on them for the day; and then they are up and away, carrying no word of God in their heart as they enter the day's strifes and toils. Really they have had only half a meal, and are not prepared as they might have been for duty. They should have eaten some of the words of God -- and then they would have been truly invigorated and made strong for their day's pilgrimage.

In all ordinary cases, God gives spiritual help through his word. He does not now talk to men as he talked to Moses on the mount. If we would hear what he has to say to us, we must open his word, and read its pages for ourselves with listening ear. He really has something to say to us every time we enter our prayer-closet. Perhaps the day is dark before us, and we are going out, not knowing which way to turn. We cry for light. What lamp will God put into our hands -- unless it is a precept or a promise? Yet we shall not carry any light with us out of our closet if we only pray, and do not open our Bible. The old psalm-writer did not say, "Prayer is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." It is the word of God which is to shed this brightening on our way.

Or we may be in sorrow, and in our quest for consolation we turn away from unsatisfying human words and empty earthly comforts -- to the closet of prayer. We ask God to comfort us. Now it is very sweet sometimes, when the sorrow is bitter and the darkness intense -- just to lay our head on our Master's bosom in silence, saying nothing at all, not even praying in words. There is comfort in simply resting within the embrace of the everlasting arms. But, if we would get real, positive comfort from God -- it must come from his word. To leave the Bible closed while we cry to God for comforting, is really to shut our ears to the angel of consolation whom we have asked God to send to us.

In all phases of experience the same is true. Prayer alone does not fit us for living sweetly and victoriously. We need the words of God, that we may use them along our way. We have an illustration of this in our Lord's own experience. When he was tempted of the devil, he answered every assault of the adversary with a word of Scripture. He did not rely on prayer alone -- but in each case drew out an arrow from his well-filled Scripture quiver, and shot it at the enemy. It will be noticed, too, that he did not take out his Bible then and there, on the field, and look up a text to suit his need; he was so familiar with the words of his Father, that he had but to recall from memory the particular one he required that moment. This shows us that Jesus had been in the habit of using the Bible in his closet all his early years.

In the sudden temptations which come to each of us every day, we need the same spiritual resources. We should always carry with us a quiver full of arrows from which we may draw at an instant's notice. If our closet devotion consists of prayer only, we shall find ourselves defenseless many a time in the place of danger.

These inspired words show us God's thoughts and God's will -- what he wants us to do, what we are to be in the life that is complete and full. We need, then, to look at these divine words in our silent times, to ponder them until they open and disclose the fragment of beauty that is in them; and then we can come out and reproduce the beauty in our own life. If we study the Scriptures when alone with God in the holy mount of prayer -- God will show us in them the patterns of character, disposition, and duty, which he wants us to work out for his glory in our daily common life. The Bible shows us what we ought to be and to do; prayer brings down grace and strength to enable us to be obedient to these heavenly visions. So we need always to take the Bible with us into the closet. Prayer alone is but half of true soul-feeding.

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