

On the Character of Paul, as a Man of Prayer.

by Thomas Reade

The sermon highlights the importance of prayer in the life of a Christian, using the example of Paul's character as a man of prayer.

Scripture: Mark 1:35, Luke 3:21, Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12, Luke 9:28, Luke 22:41, Romans 8:15, 2 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Christian Integrity"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the character of Paul as a man of prayer and unbending integrity. He emphasizes the essence of prayer as a cry of the soul, a sign of penitence, and the breath of faith, highlighting Jesus' example of fervent prayer. Paul, a man of prayer, poured out his heart daily for the churches he planted, displaying the privilege of believer's adoption into God's family. Additionally, Paul's unwavering integrity is portrayed through his transparent character, seeking the testimony of conscience and faithfully preaching the Gospel with love and sincerity.

Transcript

ON THE CHARACTER OF PAUL, AS A MAN OF PRAYER.

HIS UNBENDING INTEGRITY.

Prayer is the cry of a new-born soul, the sign of penitence, the language of desire, the breath of faith. Contrition, humility, faith, and thankfulness, form the essence of acceptable prayer. He who commands us to pray, can alone impart the spirit of prayer. Our blessed Savior has not only taught and commanded us to pray, but did Himself set us an affecting example of fervent prayer.

At his baptism, while he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

Just before he chose his twelve Apostles, he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

At another time, in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

When great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him of their infirmities, he graciously supplied their spiritual and bodily needs, and then withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

"Taking with him Peter, and James, and John, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his clothing became white and glistening, and a voice out of the overshadowing cloud, said, This is my beloved Son; hear him."

When his soul was put to grief in the garden of Gethsemane, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."

Like their Divine Master, all true believers have been, and still are, a praying people. To live without prayer is to live without God in the world. True spiritual prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the token of every promised blessing. A praying soul is a thriving soul; for as all things are possible to him that believes, so all needful things shall be granted to the prayer of faith.

PAUL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER. With holy fervor he daily poured out his heart to God, in behalf of the churches which he had planted amid the wilds of Heathen superstition. As the first evidence of his conversion, was, "Behold he prays;" so this mark of his adoption into the family of God was never obscured. In the spirit of a child, he approached God, as his Father in Christ Jesus, and felt anxious that all within the sphere of his influence should enjoy the blessedness of adoption.

How sweetly did he display this privilege of the believer in Jesus to the church at Rome, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry; Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

This exalted privilege of sonship, the Apostle made known also to the Christians of Galatia; "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying; Abba, Father. Wherefore, you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a Son, then an heir of God through Christ. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Happy indeed are they, who are thus admitted into the family of God; each member of which can sweetly sing-

"Father God! how sweet the sound!

How tender and how dear

Not all the harmony of heaven,

Could so delight the ear.

Come, sacred Spirit, seal the name,

On my expanding heart;

And show, that in Jehovah's grace,

I share a filial part."

To believe in Jesus with the heart unto righteousness, to love him with supreme affection, to live under the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, to draw near to God with the confidence of children, and to be assured that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved, is the very essence of Christianity.

How animating is the promise of Jesus to his disciples, "Whatever you shall ask in my name believing, you shall receive." But some may say- how can we thus pray? Is not faith the gift of God; and are not our hearts naturally averse from this spiritual duty? Jesus who kindly supplies all our need according to the riches of his grace, has left nothing undone in his work of mercy. His chosen servant was divinely directed to encourage the hope of sinners, and to animate the efforts of believers. "The Spirit," says he to the Romans, "helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." Thus, provision is made for every Christian pilgrim, who, journeying on his way to Zion, beholds these encouraging words- "Ask, Seek, Knock."

But must souls dead in sin be exhorted to pray? Certainly they must; because prayer is of divine appointment; and because all, without exception, are dependent upon Divine Goodness, and stand in need of Divine Mercy.

Prayer is the cry of need. The infant cries when its necessities are felt; and so does the convinced sinner, when awakened by the spirit to a sense of his danger. The humble performance of duty, is infinitely better than a thousand speculations upon it. Man's moral inability cannot take away God's right in commanding, nor man's guilt in not obeying the Divine Law.

A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Sinners must therefore be roused from their perilous state, and in the powerful language of Isaiah, exhorted to seek after, and call upon God- "Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

While men are speculating, sinners are perishing, and Satan triumphing. Time is short- Eternity is opening upon us. Now, only now, is the accepted time. Sinners must therefore be urged to cry for mercy, through the blood of Christ; leaving it with God to bless his own appointed means, who works in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

Peter said to Simon Magus, "Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you, for I perceive, that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to a multitude of sinners, whom he addressed as the crucifiers of Jesus. And what was the effect produced? They were pricked in their hearts; and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Disregarding all metaphysical distinctions about the bondage and freedom of the will, Peter, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus addressed the convicted multitude- "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save

yourselves from this untoward generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Thus, Scripture and experience attest, in spite of human theories, that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

If sinners ought to be exhorted to seek for mercy, surely saints must be stirred up to fervent prayer. It is their duty and their privilege; their strength and their consolation.

How encouraging are the promises of Jesus; "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret, shall reward you openly." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus, a blessing is pronounced on secret, and on social prayer. If they who fear the Lord, speak often one to another; how much more will they delight to hold communion with their heavenly Father through the Son of his love.

Reader, is prayer the delightful exercise of your soul? Are your refreshments sought for, and obtained, at the throne of grace? Have you access by faith in the blood of Jesus, to the Father of mercies, through the power of the Holy Spirit? Many are the apostolic exhortations to prayer "Pray without ceasing- Continue instant in prayer- Give yourselves unto prayer- I desire that men pray everywhere." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." This made Paul very desirous to have the prayers of all the churches in his behalf.

He entreats the Thessalonians, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith."

To the Hebrews he writes, "Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly; but I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

To the Corinthians, "In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead. And he did deliver us from mortal danger. And we are confident that he will continue to deliver us. He will rescue us because you are helping by praying for us. As a result, many will give thanks to God because so many people's prayers for our safety have been answered."

To the Philippians; "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

To the Romans, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

To Philemon; "Prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you."

These highly interesting extracts show how much even an inspired Apostle valued intercessory prayer. How delightful is the thought, that Christian friends, though separated from each other, may meet in spirit at a throne of grace. To the true believer, prayer is a precious privilege. At the mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, he pours out his heart, makes known his needs, and derives renewed strength to perform his duties. There he lays his burden at the feet of his Savior, and there he is filled with peace and joy. Like Hannah, he goes to his God with a sorrowful spirit, and like her, he returns with a gladsome heart. With David he cries- "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul, O save me, for your mercies' sake." And with him

he sings, "The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord has received my prayer. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." Full of faith and love, his affections yearn over perishing sinners- he makes intercession for all men- stands in the gap in seasons of national judgments- and pleads with his God in behalf of a guilty land.

Thus, the praying Christian is the true patriot- the best friend to his native country. Such a national blessing did Elisha esteem the prayers of Elijah, when he cried after the ascending Prophet- "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Oh! that our Elijahs may be jealous for the Lord their God; and lift up the voice of earnest supplication to him that smites. For, wrath has gone out from the Lord- the plague has begun. Commissioned by that Almighty Being, whose Name, whose Word, whose day is profaned, death has entered our land in its most frightful form. The pestilence which walks in darkness, and the sickness which wastes at noon-day, are now sweeping into eternity the thoughtless and unprepared. How loud is the call- "Prepare to meet your God." How solemn the warning- "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live."

O that the servants of Christ, in this our time of danger and desolation, may be stirred up to fervent prayer. Did we as a nation humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; did we plead in faith the merits of the Great Atonement; then would his wrath be turned away, and his blessing would descend upon us. With united hearts let us supplicate the God of Britain, that His Spirit may be poured out on our king, our princes, our priests, and on all the people of these realms, that England may still be His peculiar treasure-

the Ark to bear His Truth- the honored instrument, in His hands, for evangelizing the world. (The most unthinking must surely be awakened to a sense of danger, when that sweeping Pestilence, the Asiatic Spasmodic Cholera, has been brought, by the immediate hand of God, into this country. Its desolating ravages in India, Persia, and the Turkish Dominions in Asia, Africa, and Europe; its awful effects in Hungary, Russia, Prussia and France; its milder, but progressive work of destruction in our own Island, are calculated to arrest the thoughtless- and lead all to listen to the voice of God, speaking to the Nations by this tremendous scourge. God has evidently a controversy with his people. He has made bare his arm in righteous judgment. But how gently does he deal with us! we have only felt the sprinkling of the norm. If we do not repent, the overwhelming flood may soon descend upon us, hurrying whole cities into one common grave. Oh! that England may know the time of her visitation; then will God be gracious unto our land, and pity his people.)

PAUL WAS A MAN OF UNBENDING INTEGRITY.

He may truly be called a transparent character. There was nothing dark or ambiguous about him. All was open, ingenuous, sincere. He walked in the light.

Holding sacred the dictates of conscience, he sought its approving testimony! Hence he could say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

When accused before Felix as a mover of sedition, he boldly asserted his conscious rectitude; "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man."

In all ages, the faithful servants of Christ have been charged with fomenting divisions, and turning the world upside down. They have been treated as "pestilent fellows," because they testify of the world, that the works thereof are evil. But, like the upright Apostle, they can appeal with confidence to the Searcher of

hearts. He knows their inmost desires to promote His glory, and the best interests of mankind. Possessing these two blessings- "an approving conscience, and a smiling heaven," they can bear with patience the ridicule of the wicked, and labor for the good of those who seek their hurt.

As a minister of the Gospel, Paul was faithful to his trust. While the priests of heathen deities, in order to better delude their votaries, were throwing a veil of mystery around their superstitions; he, as the servant of Jehovah, had no object but to disseminate the light of Truth, no motive but that of fervent love to the Redeemer.

Neither did he shrink from human scrutiny, nor wrap himself up in falsehoods. Like Samuel of old, he could appeal to the churches with fearless integrity, "We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed by God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who tries our hearts; for neither at any time used we flattering words as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness."

Thus he appealed to them, with respect to his words, and to God, as touching his heart. They knew that he had used no "flattering words." And, he knew, that God was witness to the inward purity of his motives in preaching the Gospel among them.

Such was the straight-forwardness of Paul's conduct. This holy man had no sinister ends in view. He coveted not the passing glories of a world which lies in wickedness, nor the applause of dying multitudes. His treasure, and his heart were in heaven. No privation could draw a murmur from his lips, nor cause him to think harshly of his God and Savior. His anxieties did not spring from selfish considerations, nor from fear of personal inconveniences. Far otherwise- all his concern was to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ, whatever grief or loss, whatever pain or death, might accompany his labor.

With unspeakable joy he could say to the Corinthians, "But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. To those who are perishing we are a fearful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this? You see, we are not like those hucksters--and there are many of them--who preach just to make money. We preach God's message with sincerity and with Christ's authority. And we know that the God who sent us is watching us."

Sincerity is a pearl of great price; without it, religion is an empty name. The most gifted talents are of little worth, if unaccompanied by this Christian grace; while, clothed with it, the humblest attainments are pleasing unto God, who sees not as man sees. Religion has its seat in the heart. There, must its power be felt; and from thence, must its light proceed. To possess a single eye, which aims at nothing but the glory of Jesus, and simplicity of heart, which abhors every species of deceit, is to possess the spirit of the Gospel.

While the mind is engaged in holy meditations on the glories of redemption, the affections of the heart must be captivated by the love of Christ, and the will inclined to serve him with all its powers. This is genuine Christianity; the workmanship of God.

"O Savior, may we never rest
Until you are formed within;
Until you have calmed our troubled breast,
And crushed the power of sin.
O may we gaze upon your cross,
Until the wondrous sight
Makes earthly treasures seem but dross,
And earthly sorrows light;
Until released from carnal ties
Our spirit upward springs;
And sees true peace above the skies,
True joy in heavenly things.
There, as we gaze, may we become
United, Lord, to Thee;
And in a fairer, happier home
Your perfect beauty see."

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