

The Fellowship of Prayer

by T.M. Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in a Christian's life, highlighting its benefits, necessity, and the value of fellowship with Christ in prayer.

Scripture: Matthew 6:6

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

T.M. Anderson emphasizes the importance of consulting with God in every aspect of life, stressing the necessity of earnest prayer to tap into the abundant resources of a generous Savior. He highlights the significance of making all concerns, both spiritual and temporal, known to God through incessant and importunate prayer, rather than praying sporadically. Anderson shares a personal testimony of finding true rest of soul and quietness of heart by entering into a covenant of prayer with Christ, committing to prioritize prayer above all daily pursuits and responsibilities.

Transcript

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."--PHIL. 4:6.

This timely exhortation stresses the fact that God's people should consult with Him in every matter pertaining to life. Unless they see the imperative necessity of prayer, and give it an important place in daily life, they cannot expect to be maintained by the ample resources of a generous Saviour. It is apparent that we cannot obtain the things essential to life unless we make everything pertaining to life a matter of earnest prayer. It is impossible to live a consistent Christian life in the sight of God by praying occasionally. Praying intermittently is certainly not praying incessantly and importunately. Such careless praying is not consistent with the exhortation to pray without ceasing.

Persons praying spasmodically are like men that gorge themselves with food and drink on special occasions and starve themselves between the feasts. We do not live from feast to famine when we enter into a partnership with Christ in prayer. We are not disturbed by doubts and defeats when we make everything a matter of earnest prayer. We enjoy an unbroken fellowship with Christ when we make our requests known unto Him in daily prayer. He imparts to us the necessary strength to cope with the temptations and trials incident to life in this benighted world when everything relating to life is made known unto Him in prayer. When the inspired Apostle said, ". . . Let your requests be made known unto God," he was obviously emphasizing the importance of revealing to the Lord everything required to sustain us in

life. We find it necessary to reveal both our spiritual and our temporal needs unto Him in prayer.

Nothing pertaining to our life in this world is unimportant in the sight of God. He is interested in everything that concerns us in life.

The Lord would have us understand that we obtain rest of soul when we enter into the fellowship of prayer with Him. When Paul said, "Be careful for nothing. . . ," he revealed the true rest of soul to be found in the covenant of prayer. He is urging us to lay aside our troublesome cares and anxieties lest they hinder us in making our requests known unto the Lord. Paul was saying in substance, "Be not anxiously solicitous; do not give place to trouble, no matter what occurs; for anxiety cannot change the condition of things from bad to good, but will certainly injure your soul if you give place to it." It is certainly true that we must cast our burdens and earthly concerns upon the Lord before we can make our requests known unto Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Perhaps my personal testimony will enable others to perceive the value of entering into the fellowship of prayer with Christ, for I found true rest of soul and quietness of heart when I entered into the partnership of prayer with Him. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

I was teaching in the department of religious education in Asbury College when I entered into the covenant of prayer with Christ. It had been my purpose for several months to prepare some written messages on the Epistle to the Hebrews. In order to have time to devote to this work it was necessary for me to arise early in the morning and do the writing before the hour I was scheduled to meet my classes. I began this work during the first week of 1950.

I was suddenly awakened about midnight on January sixth. Knowing that I had a full day of work before me, I felt it necessary to sleep a few hours lest I be too weary in mind and body to do the writing and teaching. At that moment the Saviour spoke to me. He asked me if I were willing to sacrifice some sleep in order to give Him an opportunity to speak with me in the quiet hours of the morning. He told me that it was necessary to deny myself of sleep in order to prevail in prayer. I realized for the first time that denying myself of sleep was a form of fasting. For five hours I waited before the Lord in sacred worship and holy communion. My soul was greatly revived, and I felt refreshed in mind and rested in body.

After this remarkable manifestation of the Saviour I was constrained to examine my prayer life. I was impressed to consider the time spent in prayer during the average day. I was humbled before the Lord when I discovered how little time had been given to Him in prayer and meditation. It had been my daily practice from the day I was saved to spend some time in prayer morning and evening. I had established the family altar in my home. I had spent time in secret prayer during the years of my ministry. I had never knowingly overlooked the importance of prayer. I am now aware that I had never discovered the possibilities in prayer like they were revealed to me when I waited five delightful hours before the Saviour that memorable morning.

When I entered into the fellowship of prayer with Christ, I solemnly promised Him that I would not allow my plans and pursuits of daily life to infringe on my time to pray. I vowed to take sufficient time to commune with Him in prayer no matter what duties of the day demanded my attention. When I made this covenant with Christ I emptied myself of earthly possessions and concerns. I placed my ministry, my teaching, my writings, my vocation, my travels, and my home in a heap before the Lord. I separated myself from these interests as completely as I ever expect to be separated from them in death. I deliberately put these earthly concerns in a place of secondary importance in my life. I counted all things loss for the excellency

of the knowledge of the fellowship with Christ in prayer. I fully realized that Christ was speaking to me when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." I was reminded of how much I had lost through the years because I had not known the value of fellowship with Christ in prayer.

When I entered the fellowship of prayer with the Lord my soul was immediately relieved of the burdens and cares of life. I found the place of His rest in the covenant of prayer. My duties are many, and my body is often weary from my labors in the ministry, but my spirit knows no weariness for my soul dwells at ease in the haven of perfect peace. There were times in the past when the responsibilities of the ministry were almost more than my mind and body could endure. The many concerns of preaching made me restless in the night and disturbed during the day. It is clear to me now that I had not discovered the secret of resting in the Lord. I was pushing and pulling in my own strength. I was not trusting the Spirit to bring things to pass.

I have the same burdens and cares of the ministry today, but I have discovered how to cast my cares upon the Lord in the fellowship of prayer. The yoke of the Meek and Lowly Christ is easy, and His burden is light. He has given me rest of soul and quietness of spirit in the covenant of daily prayer. It is now my daily practice to keep the morning watch with the Saviour. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and look up."--Psa. 5:3. The hours between midnight and six o'clock in the morning are the most peaceful. The duties and distractions of the preceding day have ended, and the activities of the new day have not begun.

It is apparent that Jesus made it a practice of His life to pray in the quiet hours of the morning. It is written, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." -- - Mark 1:35.

The duties of the coming day demanded much from the Saviour. The virtue that went out of Him to heal the hearts and hurts of the people was replenished in the place of prayer. His physical strength was constantly renewed through His ceaseless prayers. Before the dawn of the busy day our Lord went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. We are not told where He found this peaceful place to pray. He may have found a place of sacred seclusion to pray beneath the overshadowing boughs of a towering tree where nature remained speechless with reverence and the morning star looked down in solemn contemplation. The Lord may have longed to pour out His sinless soul with strong crying and tears in some voiceless valley filled with holy hush. It could be that He sought a solitary place among the friendly hills where the silent shadows of the departing night lingered until hastened into hiding by the light of the approaching dawn. Perhaps He found rest for His burdened heart in a sequestered place in a lonely desert carpeted with shifting sands where the sighing winds ceased to whisper while He prayed.

The example of our Lord enables us to perceive the value of unburdening our hearts in the quiet hours of the morning. It is difficult to pray when the mind is filled with the confusion and rush of the day. We can pray in the quietness of the home while the day is young if we are willing to sacrifice some sleep. The Saviour admonished us to enter into the closet and shut the door. We must shut the door of our mind and exclude the cares and burdens of the day in order to prevail with God in the secret place of prayer.

One will be astonished at the results obtained in the quiet place of prayer. I have seen the Lord work wonders in answer to prayer offered before Him in the early hours of the morning. I have known Him to

heal people in homes and hospitals hundreds of miles from the place where I was praying.

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