

Some Encouragements to Pray

One of the most important and most effective things a Christian will ever do is to pray. The Bible makes it plain that prayer is a productive activity. This is taught in James 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Satan also knows this and he will hinder our prayer lives in every way possible. In this hindrance, Satan has many allies. One of them is the world that surrounds us. This sinful world tends to deaden us spiritually. Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24:12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The Parable of the Sower also indicates some of the distractions to prayer and other spiritual activities. We read in Mark 4:18-19, "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Our own sinful natures are also a hindrance to a vibrant and consistent prayer life. Just as we tend to be lazy physically, we also are inclined to be lazy spiritually. We have to stir ourselves up out of this spiritual lethargy. In fact Isaiah records the Lord's displeasure with those who did not stir themselves up to spiritual activity. It is written in Isaiah 64:7, "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee..."

Open Wide!

Recently I was doing some studying on Psalms 81:10, "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I want to share with you some of the gleanings from my studies which I hope will stimulate each of us to a more vigorous prayer life.

Commenting on this verse J. C. Philpot wrote:

When the Lord favors your soul with sweet access at a throne of grace, make the most of it. What would we think of the master of a vessel coming up the river, if, when the wind was favorable and the tide served, he would not heave her anchor, or hoisted but her fore-sail to the breeze, and would not take full advantage of wind and tide? Now it is so sometimes with our souls; a gale blows, a gale of grace on the soul, and the tide of faith rises. Is it not our wisdom, and is it not our mercy, at such a rare season, to make the most of it? If the Lord condescends to give us an ear, is it not our mercy to tell him all that our souls desire?

Do you recollect what the prophet said to the king who only struck his arrows three times on the ground, and then stopped? "But the man of God was angry with him.' You should have struck the ground five or six times!" he exclaimed. "Then you would have beaten Aram until they were entirely destroyed. Now you will be victorious only three times." (2 Ki 13:19). Sometimes it is so with us. When the Lord gives us some little access unto

himself, we do not make the most of it. Satan casts in some fiery dart, some worldly circumstance distracts our mind, some filthy imagination rises up in our bosom; and instead of resisting the devil that he may flee from us, we give way to him; the opportunity is gone, the sweet moment is lost, and it may be months before we get the ear of the King again. It will, therefore, be your wisdom and your mercy, when the gale blows, and the tide rises, to spread every sail, and to get as far as you can on your course to the haven of eternal rest and joy.

This reminds us of what Jesus told Martha in Luke 10:41-42, "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

One thing that sometimes hinders our prayer lives is to know that God is able to meet our needs, but we are not sure He is willing to do so. Therefore we are not motivated to pray with importunity. A. W. Pink says that this is all wrong. He says that our hearts are more deceitful than we realize and that the bottom line is we are often in unbelief about God's ability. He writes, "You may indeed believe intellectually in the ability and all-sufficiency of God, but your heart has not laid hold of the same: if it had, you would not call into question His willingness...you imagine that you are more anxious to receive spiritual blessing than He is desirous of bestowing them; that you are more willing, more concerned about your spiritual prosperity than He is...God does not mock His people by declaring to them that He is able while at the same time He is unwilling."

To show God's willingness Pink quoted Romans 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" He also quoted James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

To show God's ability Pink quoted Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us..."

He suggested that we should immerse ourselves in Scriptures which plainly declare God's ability and which clearly imply God's willingness. A list of these would include: 2 Cor. 9: 8; Heb. 2: 18; 7: 25; Phil. 3: 21; 2 Tim. 1: 12; Jude 24.

Pink beautifully says that we should view God not only as the OMNIPOTENT ONE but also as the MUNIFICENT ONE!

God has often blessed His children far beyond what they expected. A prime example is the Prodigal Son. He hoped he could return as a hired servant. Instead he found great love, luxurious clothing and a bountiful feast! See Luke 15: 20-24.

It is true that God does not always answer our requests as we would desire. However, this should not diminish our holy and reverent persistence. Paul prayed fervently for the thorn to be

removed. God did not grant that request. But, in His wisdom, He gave Paul something much better. Paul was eventually more than satisfied with God's answer. See 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.

Some Miscellaneous Quotes from Pink

“True prayer is artless, spontaneous, the irrepressible cry of a soul in need. Prayer is the voicing of urgent longing of soul; it is the heart turning to the Author of those longings for the satisfying of them.”

“**Ask**, as the hungry child does for its mother's breast. **Ask**, as the starving beggar does for a crust of bread. **Ask**, as the lost traveler does the first one he meets.”

“It is not a vain thing to supplicate the mercy seat: our prayers are not lost on the air or merely expended on ourselves. Asking is attended with receiving, seeking with finding, and knocking leads to opening.”

“There is an ‘asking’ which is mere formality and accomplishes nothing: if the supplicant himself is scarcely able to remember an hour afterwards that which he petitioned for, how can he expect to receive answers? If an experienced mother knows the difference between a child's asking for the mere sake of asking and making request out of a sense of urgent need, how infinitely less can we impose upon the Omniscient One.”

“If each of God's people earnestly, trustfully and daily cried unto heaven on behalf of the whole household of faith, that feeble knees might be strengthened, backsliders reclaimed, graces quickened, fruitless branches purged, half-dead preachers revived, we should soon witness showers of blessing descending on the parched vineyard.”

“A *spirit of sloth* is paralyzing to the prayer life. The soul loves its ease as well as the body.”

“The *power of unbelief* quenches the spirit of prayer. Unbelief raises objections, is occupied with difficulties, and leaves God entirely out of its considerations. Only where faith is in healthy operation can we expect any success in this holy exercised, But flirting with the world, yielding to the lusts of the flesh or heeding the lies of Satan stifles the breath of faith, and then the soul is left to gasp in the foul atmosphere of unbelief.”

A Quote from Andrew Murray

Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, above all that we ask or think. Each time, before you intercede, be quiet, first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people.