

# **By-Products of Prayer**

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## Part 1

The question is often asked, either inwardly or outwardly “Why pray?” There are many reasons why the Christian ought to pray, (e.g., he is commanded to pray — Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2; the example of Christ — Luke 3:21; 5:16; 9:29; 22:39-46; 23:34; etc.; God has revealed in His Word that He desires and needs the fellowship of His own — 1 Pet. 5:7), and among the chief reasons is one generally overlooked by many — the products of prayer.

Just as petroleum yields many byproducts, so also does prayer. These spiritual rewards, to which no earthly evaluation can be attached, are the blessed experience of all who persevere and prevail in prayer. That few today really engage in this arduous yet richly rewarding task is sadly evident. Who among us would not value an audience with a well-known king, prime minister, or president? At any time we may seek the face of Him who is the “King Of Kings, and Lord Of Lords,” One who is infinitely more interested in our individual welfare than any earthly ruler or sovereign. Yet, how little we avail ourselves of this wonderful privilege! We are glad and grateful for camps and conferences, rallies and retreats, teen-times and tea-talks, but these can never serve as a substitute for personal, private prayer in the life of the believer.

In his instructive and valuable little book, *Method in Prayer*, W. Graham Scroggie has aptly said:

“One of the greatest mistakes that a Christian can make, is to imagine that increased social or spiritual activity can be any compensation for the lack of secret

communion with God. A prayerful life is always a powerful life; and a prayerless life is always a powerless life. If we cannot pray aright, we really can do nothing aright; but how slow we are to believe that. We find a spiritual law at work in the uniform experience that the more we pray, the more we need to, and want to; and the less we pray, the less is the desire to do so" (p. 11).

Why is it that we do not pray more? This question may be answered in just one word: LAZINESS! The words of Dr. L. S. Chafer will stay with me as long as I live, for sitting in a classroom one day at Dallas, Texas, he quietly yet forcefully said to us students, "Men, prayer is hard work, and we are inherently lazy."

To be acquainted with the by-products of prayer should alone be sufficient stimuli to make us want to throw off our lethargy and pray more than ever, especially as this age draws to its climatic close. True, a price must be paid — namely, time. But is there any better investment of our precious time than to daily lay hold of God in prayer, preferably having a set time, or times, as was Daniel's habit (Dan. 6:10)? Even the world will tell us that anything really worthwhile will cost us something.

The Holy Scriptures reveal at least seven by-products of prayer (perhaps you can ferret out others), and presently we want to briefly focus our attention on each one, the first being:

### **Fortifying Peace**

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa26:3).

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

“Why pray when you can worry?” or “worry now and pray later” seems to be the evident philosophy of some Christians, but this sort of thing even though somewhat facetiously stated, is completely contrary to God’s will and only demonstrates a lack of faith and obedience. How such conduct on our part must grieve the heart of our gracious God!

It was as a young boy that the words of Isaiah 26:3 were indelibly impressed upon me by my godly grandmother, and I never read or recall this text but what I think of her. Do others ever think of us in this way? An invalid during the last seven years of her earthly life, and never uttering a word of complaint, she was a splendid example of the above quoted texts. What was her secret? She possessed “perfect peace.” How? Her mind was stayed and stopped on God, and day by day she breathed freely and deeply of the refreshing atmosphere of the Throne of Grace. Quietly and sweetly submissive to His will, having known “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1) for at least half a century, she continually realized the promise of the “peace of God” in Philippians 4:7 simply because she obeyed the prescription of 4:6.

These familiar verses need little, if any, explanation. What is needed is the daily appropriation and consequent exemplification of them. Remember the old saying, “Anxious for nothing, prayerful in everything, thankful for anything?” This sums up the simple prescription for realizing the fortifying “peace of God”

which passeth and surpasseth all understanding, and misunderstanding, too!

## **Renewed Spiritual Strength**

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa.- 40:31).

Over and over again in the Scriptures, especially in the Psalms, we are exhorted by example and precept to wait upon God (cf. Ps. 27:14; 37: 9, 34; 40:1; 65: 1,5; Prov. 20: 22). Unless we learn to truly Wait upon Him, we can never hope to Worship, War, Work, Walk and Witness effectively for His glory. The word “wait” can have at least three distinct meanings in connection with this promise: (1) to stop; (2) to be in an attitude of expectation; and (3) to bind together by twisting (this is the meaning of the Hebrew word), much as a vine binds itself to the trunk and branches of a great tree.

Yesterday’s strength will not do for today, nor will today’s strength do for tomorrow. Even as Israel gathered fresh manna every morning, with the exception of the Sabbath, so must we seek daily to wait upon the Lord that we might exchange our weakness for His strength.

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The remainder of this splendid article on the By-Products of Prayer will appear in the August issue. Do not miss it. We regret that space did not permit inserting the entire subject in the July number.—Editor.

## Part 2

\*Food for the Flock 9:9 (Sept 1963)\*

Every Need Supplied

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matt. 7:7-8).

It has been said that “The greatest saints are the asking saints.” So often we fail to ask the Lord for our wants and needs. The latter He has promised to supply (Phil. 4:19); the former He delights to give when in accord with His will and what He knows is best for us. “Ask,” “seek” and “knock” are present tense commands, emphasizing a necessary persistence in our praying and appropriately illustrated by the Lord’s parable of the importunate friend (see Luke 11:5-8). The words of Matthew 7:7 have often been used as an acrostic:

Ask

Seek

Knock

The practical minded James chided his readers, saying, “... ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (Jas. 4:2-3).

What a blessed by-product of prayer! Every need supplied. But we must ask.

## **Abounding Joy**

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

Again, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to “ask,” the present tense once more stressing perseverance in prayer, the sense being: “keep on asking, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Christian, have you lost your joy? Then PRAY! If any man had reason to lose his joy, it was Nehemiah. Having been granted permission by Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Persian king, to go to Jerusalem — and this through prayer — Nehemiah made the three-month journey. Having at last arrived in the city of his fathers, he was faced with the arduous task of rebuilding the ruined walls and gates, rallying and readying the returned remnant, and restoring moral and civil order — all in the face of enemy opposition from within and without. With the manifold task of rebuilding finally completed, what does the godly, stalwart Nehemiah say? “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (8:10). What was his secret? Prayer! A study of this great and neglected Old Testament book will readily reveal that Nehemiah was a man of prayer, and it is noteworthy that his praying was coupled with hard work. A true builder for God, he had learned the secret of praying without ceasing, that is, of holding communion with God about everything as it happened. Whether sitting, standing, walking, or working, he turned his heart simply and naturally to the Lord as an ever-present Friend. Prayer was as simple and natural for Nehemiah as breathing.

A joyless Christian is a weak Christian, and the basic reason for such a condition stems from prayerlessness.

No prayer; no joy. No joy; no strength. It's that simple and clear-cut. But faithfulness in prayer will yield fulness of joy.

## **All-Sufficient Grace**

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

At this stage of his experience the Apostle Paul was a strong Christian, but a physical affliction of some sort (it matters not what it was) proved a tremendous trial to his soul, even bringing him into conflict with the powers of hell. Three times over he cried to the Lord for deliverance, revealing on his part a readiness to pray and assurance of being heard. Did the Lord hear and answer? He certainly did, but perhaps not quite in the way Paul expected Him to answer and not as the great Apostle had initially asked Him. Instead of affirmatively answering his petition, the Lord gave him a promise, the realization of which transformed his burden into a blessing; his trial into a triumph. This promise was the sufficiency of Christ's grace to meet his deep need, and as never before Paul entered into the experience and appreciation of “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10), especially as he undoubtedly recalled the Lord's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:36-46 with Luke 22:44).

The present tense of “is” in the Lord’s promise to Paul should fill our hearts with the assurance that His grace today is no less sufficient to minister to our needs than it was in the Apostle’s day, even midst the severest of trials and temptations. If we will but draw on it, Christ’s limitless grace — the infinite love and power of His blessed Person and presence in action on our behalf — is always there “in time of need” (Heb. 4:16), G. Campbell Morgan said that he never tired of pointing out that the Greek phrase translated, “in time of need,” is a colloquialism, of which our expression, “nick of time,” is the exact equivalent.

Bishop Handley C. G. Moule has attested the authenticity of the account that has often been told of an esteemed servant of Christ who, in an hour of deep trial, agonizing before the Lord, praying, “Let Thy grace be sufficient for me.” Momentarily lifting his tear-filled eyes, a newly hung wall plaque met his gaze, bearing the words, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” The “is” was brightly and conspicuously painted, and the text came home to his heart with such freshness and blessing that he rose to a new life of peace and power in Christ (The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 118).

## **Divine Wisdom**

“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” (Jas. 1:5).

Wisdom is the practical use of knowledge, and every day of our lives we need divine wisdom, especially midst the various testings of life which sooner or later come to all (see Jas. 1:2-4). This choice and challenging text reveals the twofold secret of obtaining it. First of all, we must

realize that we lack wisdom; and, secondly, we must ask God for it. Again, we are commanded to “ask,” the present tense of the verb once more emphasizing persistence in prayer — “let him keep on asking.” Furthermore, if we ask God for wisdom we are assured that He will not rebuke us, for He delights to give with a free hand, as conveyed by the adverb “liberally” (see 2 Col, 8:2). There are no strings attached to the Lord’s giving. When He gives, He keeps nothing back, but graciously promises to grant His wisdom to all who ask Him for it. This verse is aptly illustrated, especially the joyous theme of God’s gracious giving, in the Old Testament account of Solomon’s prayer for wisdom and the Lord’s generous answer (see 1 Kings 3:9-12).

### **An Increased Sense Of The Presence Of God**

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (Jas. 4:8).

As for “the proud,” who feel no need of coming to the Throne of Grace, God “resisteth” such (Jas. 4:6), that is, He continually keeps them at a distance from Him. But the humble-hearted, who have put away every vestige of pride and all thought of self-sufficiency, are promised an increased sense of God’s presence as they act upon the blessed invitation to draw near to Him. In fact, “draw nigh” is not alone an invitation, it is a command, the tense calling for a decisive stand.

It was David who said, “It is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps. 73:28). And this should be our decisive and daily attitude, knowing that God never refuses the fellowship of those who seek His face and that He cannot but be intensely grieved if we choose to live at a distance from Him. True, the Lord has promised to be

with us always, to never leave us, nor forsake us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5), but unless we draw near to Him we shall never know the reality and blessedness of His presence. It is nothing short of tragic that so many Christians seem content to know the presence of Christ only as a fact, not as a force; only as a promise, not as a power.

The brief but blessed words of our text would suggest not only the idea of waiting upon God in prayer, but also the thought of walking with God along life's pathway, just as Enoch did for 300 years (see Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5-6)! However, such a privilege requires preparation, the kind of preparation set forth in the remaining words of James 4:8.

Let us be like Abraham of old, the great "Pioneer of Faith," who "stood yet before the Lord" and "drew near" (Gen. 18:22-23).

Here, then, are seven by-products of prayer: Fortifying Peace, Renewed Spiritual Strength, Every Need Supplied, Abounding Joy, All-Sufficient Grace, Divine Wisdom, and an Increased Sense of The Presence of God.

Martin Luther once said: "If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith." And to this might be added that if we should neglect prayer but a single day, we should forfeit much of the spiritual blessedness of prayer's by-products which are its enriching and enabling rewards.