

The Divine Art of Soul-Winning

by

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CHAPTER 3 -

THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN SOUL-WINNING

He Is Counting on You

He is counting on you!
On a love that will share
In His burden of prayer,
For the souls He has bought
With His life-blood, and sought
Through His sorrow and pain
To win "home" yet again.
He is counting on you!
If you fail Him -
What then?

THE WORKER WHOSE SUPREME desire and passion is to be used in co-operation with the HOLY SPIRIT in the winning of men to CHRIST, must master in some degree the holy art of intercession. If the Master wept and prayed over lost souls, then His servant must do the same. Prayer must ever occupy a pre-eminent place in the soul-winner's program, for the salvation of the soul is not a human, but a divine work. Only through prayer can the power of GOD be released.

If prayer, then, occupies so important a place, it follows that whatever hinders us in its exercise must be sacrificed. Any price is worth paying which will make us more powerful in prayer. If GOD is to answer our prayers, we must be sure that we are standing on praying ground. The psalmist warns: "**If I regard [cling to] iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me**" (Psalm 66:18), let alone answer me.

Before we are on true praying ground, we must have renounced every sin about which the HOLY SPIRIT has convicted us. Have you done this, or is there a controversy between your soul and GOD? You will know when the last thing has been dealt with.

Then it is necessary that we have a heart at leisure from itself and its own concerns, a heart that

is able to bear the burden of souls and to travail for them in birth until the new life is implanted. Listen to the apostle Paul as he prays, and note how his prayers are all for others. "**I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh**" (Romans 9:3). Mark Epaphras, "**always laboring fervently . . . in prayers**" (Colossians 4:12).

Hear Count Zinzendorf as he prays for a few girls ranging in age from ten to thirteen whose spiritual education has become his care. "He observed that though their demeanor was blameless, and their intellectual grasp of the truth was satisfactory, yet no evidence of a heart knowledge of GOD appeared among them. This weighed on his soul and led him to earnest intercession for them. Cultured, wealthy young nobleman that he was, he was not above taking thought for the spiritual welfare of a few girls. More intense grew his concern, culminating at last in a season of such truly energized prayer as produced a most extraordinary effect." The blessing he desired for his class came, and much more too, for this was the beginning of the mighty work among the Moravians, which bore fruit in their marvelous missionary enterprise.

The soul-winner's prayer will be first for himself, and then for the soul to be won. For himself he will need to pray a threefold prayer.

First: for moral courage to speak for CHRIST when opportunity offers. In the world which crucified CHRIST, it will never be easy to speak for Him. To some, the fear of man is an almost insuperable barrier. Is it boldness you need? Then do as the disciples did - pray! "**Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word . . . And they spake the word of God with boldness**" (Acts 4:29-31). "**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**" (Philippians 4:13). You will be able, after prayer, to do what you never could have done without it.

Second, for guidance as to whom to approach. To speak to men indiscriminately and without inspiration and guidance is often hurtful both to the worker and to those whom he addresses. It goes without saying that GOD does not expect us to speak to everyone we meet, although He does expect us to be willing so to do. Dr. F. B. Meyer used to feel constantly burdened in regard to speaking to everyone he met, until he made it a matter of prayer that GOD would show him the ones to whom to speak. The case of Philip the evangelist is an outstanding example of this. (See Acts 8:26).

There are many souls with whom we come into contact, for whom GOD has no message at that moment. If we cultivate the habit of constantly looking to the LORD for instructions, He will guide us with His eye as to when to speak and when to keep silent. Dr. Torrey made a practice of sitting in a double railway seat, and then prayed that GOD would bring to his seat the person whom he could help.

Third, for guidance as to what to say. Let the reader remember that every soul-winner was once as inexperienced as he is. If GOD is calling you to speak to someone, then surely you can trust Him for the message. He knows what each case needs, and has given the HOLY SPIRIT for the very purpose of bringing the right Scriptures to your remembrance. Trust Him to do it. "**He shall... bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you**" (John 14:26).

The worker's prayer for the soul to be won will also be threefold.

First, that any indifference or hostility may be broken down and an opening made for delivering the message of salvation. Unless the SPIRIT of GOD precede the worker, he will try in vain to storm the citadel of the soul. Persistent, believing prayer has often broken down the most determined opposition.

Second, that the soil of the heart may be prepared for the sowing of the seed. This again is the work of the SPIRIT of GOD. "**When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**" (John 16:8). He does His work of conviction in answer to prayer.

Third, that the soul may be liberated from the power of Satan. It is just here that the real battle is fought. Prayer of this kind is a spiritual warfare. Satan, the strong man armed of Matthew 12:29, has bound every son of Adam, and contests their deliverance every inch of the way. It is by believing prayer alone that the strong man can be bound and souls delivered. "**They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony**" (Revelation 12:11).

The prayer warrior must learn how to plead the victory of Calvary, for the blood of the Lamb has forever broken the power of the Devil, and robbed him of his prey. "Real prayer," says Gordon Watt, "is opposing a great spiritual force to the onslaught of evil, and asking GOD to put into operation the work done by His Son on the Cross, which was not only the redemption of man, but the defeat of the prince of this world." Plead the blood of the LAMB for the liberation of the soul for whom you pray.

Our praying is likely to be futile unless it is definite in its aim. The marksman is aiming at one spot in all the wide world. After he has shot, he knows whether or not he has hit it. Our prayers should be of a similar order.

They should be so definite that we shall know whether or not they have been answered. We must pray for definite souls. But for which souls? Here again the HOLY SPIRIT comes to our aid. Our petitions should be Spirit-taught. As we wait before GOD, He will burden our hearts for certain souls who are within the sphere of our influence. In Dr. Torrey's first pastorate, GOD laid on his heart in this way two persons. He prayed for them throughout his pastorate, but neither was converted. For some years he kept on praying for them daily, and when later conducting a mission in that city both accepted CHRIST the same night. His was a Spirit-taught petition. How appropriate are the words of Scripture: "**Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:**" (Romans 8:26).

Then too our praying should be systematic. Too often we pray haphazardly for whatever comes into the mind. "**The Lord is a God of judgment**" (Isaiah 30:18 - in this case, the word "judgment" meaning "system" or "method"). His children should be like Him. System in praying will help to beget that perseverance which is so often conspicuous by its absence from our prayers. We pray and run away. "Foolish boys that knock at a door in wantonness," said the old Puritan, "will not stay till someone cometh to open to them, but a man that hath business will knock and knock again until his call is answered."

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for . . . to him that knocketh [knocks, and keeps on knocking] it shall be opened" (Luke 11:9, 10). Let us not hang up the receiver before the answer comes over the heavenly wires. **"Men ought always to pray and not to faint"** (Luke 18:1).

But apart from a believing heart all the foregoing conditions may be complied with, and yet no answer be received. **"He that cometh to GOD must believe"** (Hebrews 11:6). **"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth . . . let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord"** (James 1:6, 7). Count on GOD's good faith. Do not grieve and dishonor Him through disbelieving Him. **"He is faithful that promised."** Expect Him to do the unexpected.

The writer knows of no method which is of greater help in securing definiteness of aim, system, and perseverance in prayer than the use of the "Throne of Grace Book," of the One by One Band. It consists almost entirely of blank pages on which are entered the names of people for whom the SPIRIT has impressed the worker to pray, space being left for the insertion of the date of answer. Any one can make his own book of remembrance, and keep these souls constantly before the LORD in prayer. Begin at once. You will find, that very soon your praying will prepare the way for witnessing, and you will have the surpassing joy of entering the date of answer opposite some of the names.

Prayer is GOD's mightiest instrument in the salvation of souls, and it is to be doubted if any soul is saved apart from the believing prayer of some saint. Writing of his own conversion, Dr. J. Hudson Taylor said: "Little did I know at that time what was going on in the heart of my dear mother, 70 or 80 miles away. She rose from the dinner-table that afternoon with an intense yearning for her boy's conversion, and feeling that a special opportunity was afforded her of pleading with GOD on my behalf, she went to her room and turned the key in the door, resolved not to leave that spot until her prayers were answered. Hour after hour that dear mother pleaded for me, until at length she could pray no longer, but was constrained to praise GOD for that which His SPIRIT had taught her was already accomplished - the conversion of her only son.

"When our dear mother came home a fortnight later, I was the first to meet her at the door, and to tell her I had such glad news to give. I can almost feel that dear mother's arms around my neck as she pressed me to her bosom and said: 'I know, my boy; I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell me.'

'Why,' I asked in surprise, 'has Amelia broken her promise? She said she would tell no one.'

"My dear mother assured me that it was not from any human source that she had learned the tidings, and went on to tell the little incident above. You will agree with me that it would be strange indeed if I were not a believer in the power of prayer."

LORD, TEACH US SO TO PRAY

~ end of chapter 3 ~
