

Subject, Prayer.

Madame President and My Dear Sisters:

I do not intend this afternoon to occupy very much time on the subject which has been allotted me. I feel that rather we should use the time in the exercise of the thing itself, namely, prayer. This is a favorite topic in spiritual circles and the emphasized subject of many a sermon that perhaps was prepared without its help and inspiration. Too many words have been spent in extolling this truth and too few in real prayer itself.

There is not much new that can be said but a few old standard truths may be impressed. The old motto, "We learn to do by doing," can be very appropriately applied here by saying, "We learn to pray by praying." No one would expect to become an expert musician without practising, no more can we expect to become intercessors in prayer unless we pray. We can talk on the subject and urge others to profit by it, but unless we pray, it will remain only a theory and its power will not be felt by us, the cause of Christ will suffer and our own souls become barren and void of blessing.

Why isn't more time spent in prayer? We might name a number of reasons, but let us ask the question differently. Why do I not spend more time in prayer? I believe we can summarize it in lack of interest and still farther back by saying a lack of life in the soul. We do not take the time to pray. Other things crowd in and usurp the place that prayer ought to hold and this all-important exercise is neglected and soon forgotten. Why should we allow our household duties or any cares or pleasure to prevent us from enjoying the inestimable privilege of communing with God. Better to refuse to spend so much time in idly conversing with an earthly friend rather than shorten or do away entirely with our conversation with God. Nothing else can equal the value of prayer.

But why should we pray? Why may we not do without it? In answer, first, God commands it. If this were the only reason it would be a sufficient one. Jesus taught His disciples to pray and spent whole nights in prayer. I believe anything worth while has never been accomplished without it. Prayer does open doors that are closed against all other forces and makes many a path clear that otherwise is impassable. I once heard of a man who said he prayed, not because he expected his prayer to be answered but because he was commanded to pray. Again I say this reason would be sufficient even if it were all, but our souls must be in a deplorable condition when there is no heart cry and impassioned petition to God for our own welfare and the crying needs of his work.

Thus secondly: Our own souls need prayer, yet more, they must have prayer or die. We doubtless have known for years the old words, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." What happens to our bodies when we fail to breathe—only one reply—death. What then takes place in our souls when we fail to pray—spiritual paralysis and death inevitably follow. This is more

than theory, it is fact. Does not the experience of every soul uphold it? We truly believe that at least ninety-nine per cent. of backslidden Christians would be active and progressing today if they had not neglected prayer. We emphatically say, our souls must have prayer.

But not yet can we pause for "no man liveth to himself." We say thirdly: The needs of the work constrain us to intercede with God for souls who are without salvation. Every part of the work merits our interest, but none more so than the needs of the missionary fields. How we should yearn for the enlightenment of heathen hearts, for the encouragement and blessing of God on the missionaries we send and for the home work which makes the foreign possible. Is our duty done when we willingly give our dollar to support this work? Can we then say we have done what we could? Decidedly no. This is duty only half done, and cannot be completed until we pray. The only time we are especially instructed by Jesus what to pray for was when He said: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." This is the urgent need of our missions today. Let us pray to this end.

Much more could be said about the necessary conditions for prayer, but suffice it to say our hearts must be clean before God for David said, "If I regard unquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me."

Prayer is a great preparation to equip us for every need. We have a dual being to keep prepared. As we arise in the morning we take care to clothe and feed and make ready our bodies for the daily duties. But what about the inner being—the soul? Do we take equal care that we prepare it by prayer for the work of the day? Do we assure our hearts of victory in the early morning by strengthening our confidence and hold on God? How many of us spend as much time on our souls as we do on our bodies? And which is the more important? If either has to be neglected which should it be? Again, when we go to the house of God, how many of us are really prepared to go? In other words, how many are ready to go to church? True we may be carefully dressed, our hat, coat and gloves all properly adjusted, but what about our inner self? Does God who looketh on the heart see that we are prepared to go to worship and take part in his work? If we haven't time for both, let us spend less time on the natural body and see that the spiritual is properly renewed and equipped. In the worship of the temple the burning of incense was an important feature, and John in the Revelation speaks of the golden vials full of odors or incense which are the prayers of saints. When we come to God's house let us come with the incense of prayer in our hearts and rising from our lips—having prayed at home for the work and ready to pour out our heart's longings in the church with those who also love the cause.

Then in private and public for our own needs and for the work's sake let us beseech the Lord as Moses did for the people of Israel, as David exhorts, "Ye people pour out your heart before Him" and not stop until we can say with Hannah, "I have poured out my soul before the Lord." Paul exhorts to "pray without ceasing" and

"pray everywhere." Through prayer we are exhorted and commanded with submission to God, with confidence in God, in a forgiving spirit, in full assurance of faith, with boldness, with the whole heart in the Holy Ghost. Let our prayers be fervent and from the heart. James tells us not that the sleepy indifferent prayer availeth much but that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Then as we go to our homes let us make a new covenant of prayer with God. As someone has said, "Let us have a place to pray, a time to pray and then pray."

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TRUST AND HE WILL DELIVER.

He is a buckler to all those who trust in Him.—Ps. 18:30.

The Lord is my Rock and my fortress and my Deliverer.—Ps. 18:2.

My goodness and my fortress; who subdueth my people under me.—Ps. 144:2.

Trust in the Lord, with all thy might,
Trust in Him, and He'll give thee light,
Trust in Him whatever betide,
Trust in Him and He'll be thy guide.

Trust in the Lord, the maker of all;
Trust in Him and thou shalt never fall,
Trust in Him and so happy you'll be,
Trust in Him and He'll set you free.

Free from the world, and every snare,
Free from allurements, beauteous and rare,
Free from all that could gender strife,
Yes, free—freedom—free in this life.

Free from worry and every stain,
Free from everything—yes, every sin;
Free in Jesus—in Him to abide,
Free, free in Him to hide.

So trust in Him the Almighty God,
Trust in Him e'en beneath the rod;
Trust in Him, fate'er may be,
Trust in Him—He cares for thee.

He thy portion and strength will be,
He thy goodness and fortress—He,
He thy buckler, oh hear Him declare,
He for thy sake, His arm will make bare.

Nothing is ever too hard for thy God,
Ever and always He'll be thy Lord;
Lord, over smaller or greater foes,
Lord over joys or Lord over woes.

Making all things turn to His praise,
Causing all things to chant His lays;
Conquering everything, great or small,
For everyone that just trusts Him with all.

ETHEL FOOTE RAMSAY.

TRUST ON!

Trust on, O heart of mine!
Though dark the way and rough the angry
sea,
The Pilot holds the helm, thy Father beck-
ons thee:

One guides the course of every songster
free,

To Him thine all resign.

Sing on, O soul of mine!

Sing songs of faith and hope and joy and
cheer,

Outsound the discord grating on thine ear,
And bring celestial music, sweet and clear

To lonelier hearts than mine.

—Martha Arnold Boughton.